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FALLING FOR LIONS: TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE VAMPIRE
CHARACTER IN LITERATURE

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Esta Dissertação foi julgada adequada para obtenção do Título de Mestre em Letras e aprovada em sua forma final pelo Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras/Inglês e Literatura Correspondente, da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina.

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ABSTRACT

Gothic Literature is responsible for producing creatures that have haunted people's dreams and have fostered the imagination of many for more than a century. However, none of such creatures have ever been in the spotlight as the contemporary vampire. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Edward Cullen, the teenager vampire from American author Stephenie Meyer's literary phenomenon *Twilight* (2005), has captured the hearts of a generation of young readers from all over the planet. The *Twilight* character is responsible for making vampires, and therefore Gothic fiction receive renewed attention from the readership, allowing a proliferation of vampire-related novels, especially those that are aimed at young adults.

Edward also epitomizes a new depiction of the vampire character that bears little resemblance to Dracula, from Bram Stoker's eponymous novel, published in 1897. The analysis of the physical aspects and personality traits that place Dracula and Edward on different sides of the same coin are the core of the present investigation, which is also committed to explore the changes already signalized in the Ricean vampires Louis and Lestat, from the 1976 best-seller *Interview with the Vampire*. In addition, this research claims that Edward is a hero despite his villainous nature. In such change of paradigm lies, arguably, the explanation for the popularity of Edward Cullen and the contemporary vampire character, signalizing that the bloodsuckers are here to stay. And not just under moonlight.

Keywords: vampire, hero, gothic literature, *Dracula*, *Interview with the Vampire*, *Twilight*.

RESUMO

A Literatura Gótica é responsável por dar vida à criaturas que têm assombrado o sonho das pessoas e alimentado a imaginação de muitos por mais de um século. Entretanto, nenhuma dessas criaturas tivera a chance de estar no centro das atenções como o vampiro contemporâneo. Na primeira década do século XXI, Edward Cullen, o vampiro adolescente criado pela americana Stephenie Meyer em *Crepúsculo* (2005), capturou o coração de uma legião de jovens leitores ao redor do planeta. O personagem de *Crepúsculo* é responsável por fazer com que vampiros e, consequentemente a ficção gótica, receber atenção renovada por parte do público leitor, permitindo a proliferação de livros com temáticas vampirescas, especialmente aqueles que são direcionados aos jovens adultos.

Edward também exemplifica uma nova personificação de vampiro que guarda pouca semelhança com Drácula, do romance homônimo de Bram Stoker, publicado em 1897. A análise das mudanças físicas e de personalidade que colocam Drácula e Edward em lados opostos da mesma moeda constitui o foco principal da presente investigação, que também se compromete a explorar as mudanças já sinalizadas em Louis e Lestat, do best-seller *Entrevista com o Vampiro*, de Anne Rice, em 1976. Além disso, esta pesquisa defende que Edward é um herói apesar de sua natureza vil. Nesta mudança de paradigma está, possivelmente, a explicação para a popularidade de Edward Cullen e o personagem vampiresco contemporâneo. Parece que os vampiros vieram para ficar. E não apenas sob a luz do luar.

Palavras-chave: vampiro, herói, literatura gótica, *Drácula*, *Entrevista com o Vampiro*, *Crepúsculo*.

*For my godmother, Irlene
Cabral Pinto, who taught me
books are the best thing.*

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1 - INTRODUCTION

1 Here, There and Everywhere

Vampires seem to emerge from the deepest, darkest places to enchant every new generation. These night creatures, present in nearly every culture, spring from the gothic world into different types of media. Through the course of the past two centuries, it is possible to find vampires portrayed in theatre, cinema, television, and naturally, literature. It is, however, in the last few years, that the vampire figure has gained more attention, being transformed by and for the public into a popular character. From ugliness to beauty, demon to angel, villain to hero, vampires have trodden a long path to reach the hearts and minds of millions of people around the planet.

Much of the popular imagery of the vampire character comes from *Dracula*, the fictional nobleman who lives in an obscure castle in Eastern Europe. *Dracula* is the main character of the eponymous novel, published in 1897, written by Irish author Bram Stoker. After reading the novel, a manager named Hamilton Deane, who was an Irishman like Stoker, showed interest in financing a version of the novel to be performed on stage. Deane managed to transform *Dracula* into a play, with a certain amount of profit, performing the vampire story in Ireland during the year of 1927. Later, *Dracula* was staged in England and

afterwards, it reached the United States. It is from the theatre—and Deane’s mind—that comes the popular characterization of Dracula wearing a tuxedo and a cape, an image that lasts in the mind of many when it comes to the Transylvanian noble.

The popularity of *Dracula* has also raised the interest of some producers in the cinema industry. Nonetheless, the Stoker family refused to give their permission to an adaptation. As a result, director F. W. Murnau, one of the most famous names of the German expressionist movement, was responsible for the creation of *Nosferatu*, in 1922. *Nosferatu*, as it will be shown later, is also a common term used to describe a vampire. *Nosferatu*, the film, was based on *Dracula* but it used different names for the characters. It centers on an odd- looking vampire named Count Orlok, a wealthy man who wishes to buy a house in the city of Wisbourg, England, while he also pursues Ellen, his real-estate agent’s wife.

The first authorized adaptation of *Dracula* came to the big screen only in 1931. In this first adaptation the vampire count was played by the—at the time—unknown Hungarian actor Bella Lugosi who, unlike the old, strange looking Dracula conceived by Stoker, personified a vampire with blue eyes, and immense sex appeal. Lugosi, who had also played Dracula in the American theater version some years before, started a last trending of vampires that make the female audience swoon. Following in Lugosi’s footsteps, English actor Christopher Lee interpreted the vampire in *Horror of Dracula* in 1953 as well as Frank Langella in yet another eponymous film in 1979. Gary Oldman played the vampire nobleman in Francis Ford Coppola’s *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* in 1992. Italian director Dario Argento is responsible

for the latest adaptation of the novel, entitled *Dracula 3D*, with the relatively unknown German actor Thomas Kretschmann playing the vampire in the 2012 film.

Cinema has proved to be a prolific source of vampires' renditions. Two years after *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, an adaption of *Interview with the Vampire*, based on the best-selling novel written by American writer Anne Rice in 1976, reached the cinemas. Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt, two of the great names of Hollywood at the time, were cast as the aristocratic vampires Lestat and Louis, respectively. The film, which recreated the atmosphere of the city of New Orleans in the late nineteenth century that Rice described in her novel, was well received by the audience, making more than a hundred million dollars to the Warner Brothers Studios and boosted the selling of Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*. In 2002, the third book of the series, *The Queen of the Damned*, was also adapted to the cinema, with Irish actor Stuart Townsend playing Lestat. *The Queen of the Damned*, however, failed to repeat the success *Interview with the Vampire* had obtained, making only thirty million dollars to the Warner Brothers Studios.

Cinema has also shown to the world other vampires with great popular appeal. In 1983, *The Hunger* depicted the issue of immortality, which is so commonly associated to vampires. The film, with French actress Catherine Deneuve and English singer David Bowie was well-received and it even included a song played by the gothic group Bauhaus called "Bella Lugosi's Dead", from 1979, in a clear reference to the most famous actor ever to play Dracula. In 1987, *The Lost Boys* brought fame to a generation of young actors such as Jason Patrick and Kiefer Sutherland, as it showed a small town in California peopled with

vampires and vampire hunters. A little more than a decade later, American actor Wesley Snipes played an Afro-American vampire, whose job was to kill those of his kind who had turned evil in the popular trilogy *Blade* (1998-2004). Snipes was not, though, the first actor to play an Afro-American vampire. Eddie Murphy had previously played a night wanderer in the 1995's *Vampire in Brooklyn*.

The saga of vampires in cinema continues with the *Underworld* franchise. In the *Underworld* universe, vampires are grouped in a society of their own and are subjected to rules that differed from the ones that govern human society. Also, the vampires face an ongoing battle against werewolves—or lycans, as they are called. So far, *Underworld* is a series of four movies released between 2003 and 2012. More recently, a Swedish production of 2008, *Let the Right One In*, focusing on the peculiar bond formed between two children, a timid boy and the vampire-girl next door, caught enough attention from the public and critics to raise the interest for an American remake with the title of *Let Me In*, released in 2010.

It is not possible to talk about vampires in cinema without mentioning *Twilight*. In 2008, the love story between Edward Cullen, a seventeen-year-old vampire and the girl he adores—and wishes to kill—presented the world to a depiction of the vampire that, even though was not new, certainly transformed the portrayal of vampires for the contemporary generation. *Twilight* is the first of a series of four novels, published between 2005 and 2008, written by American writer Stephenie Meyer. All the novels have gained filmic adaptations between 2008 and 2012. As *The Lost Boys* twenty years before, the young,

unknown cast of *Twilight* was catapulted to instant fame with this vampire-teenage love affair.

Vampires have also appeared in television, mainly in the form of series. From 1966 to 1975, American network ABC produced the show *Dark Shadows*, which depicted a world where supernatural beings exist. *Dark Shadows* focuses on the Collinses, a rich family from the state of Maine. It was not a very successful show until a year after its release. The change and the rise of ratings were due to the introduction of a character named Barnabas Collins, a hundred-and-seventy-five-year-old vampire who is in pursuit of a long lost love. In his article “Vampires – From Villain to Anti-Hero”, Dominic von Riedemann states that Barnabas Collins was frequently described as “an undead Romeo eternally searching for his Juliet” (par 10). Riedemann also claimed that Barnabas was pivotal for the introduction of a vampire character that could be “pitied as well as feared” (par 10). Recently, *Dark Shadows* has been adapted to the cinema with American actor Jonny Depp playing the role of Barnabas Collins.

In 1997, another American network, Warner Bros, aired *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer*. The series was, as opposed to the film in which it was based, extremely popular among teenagers. It tells the story of Buffy Summers, a young woman who belongs to a long line of vampire hunters. Buffy has the tricky task of performing her duty as a demon hunter while trying to lead a somewhat normal life with her family, friends and school. Although the focus of the series is on a human, the vampires have their share of spotlight, especially with the addition of the character Angel, a more than two-hundred-year-old vampire with the appearance of a man in his mid-twenties. In the “buffyverse”, as the fans

of the show call the world in which Buffy and her friends and foes inhabit, Angel is a vampire with a split personality.

Angel first appeared in *Buffy*'s first season. As a vicious killer, he is known as Angelus. After much blood spilt, Angelus is condemned to live with a soul. The possession of a soul makes Angelus (that now went by the name of Angel) live with the eternal guilt of the murderous acts he committed. The guilt and regret Angel feels makes the character's construction closer to Rice's Louis and Meyer's Edward, two characters that will be better analyzed later. *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer* aired from 1997 to 2003. However, Angel became so famous that Warner Bros created a spin-off series that explored the life of the vampire in 1999. The show lasted five seasons and followed Angel as he works as a detective whose job is to help the citizens of Los Angeles, California.

At present two television shows explore the vampire universe. Also from Warner Brothers, *The Vampire Diaries*, based on the L.J. Smith's novels published in the beginning of the nineties, is on its third season and it is the most successful show of the network. The pilot episode alone attracted the attention of almost five million viewers, according to the network webpage. *The Vampire Diaries* deal with the love and hate relationship of two vampire brothers, Damon and Stefan Salvatore, and their dispute for the heart of Elena Gilbert in the fictitious town of Mystic Falls. The Salvatore brothers, like Edward Cullen, are young. Damon, the older brother, is in his early-twenties, and Stefan looks like a seventeen-year-old teenager. When the series begun, Stefan was portrayed as a vampire who wanted to live an ordinary life, giving the audience the impression that his human nature had prevailed upon

his vampire nature while Damon seemed to have forgotten that he was once human. As the series progresses, though, it is shown that Stefan has a dark side too which he sometimes fails to ignore, and that Damon is capable of doing good.

HBO, another TV network, is responsible for the production of *True Blood*. Like *The Vampire Diaries*, *True Blood* is based on a series of books, *The Southern Vampire Mysteries*, written by Charlaine Harris between 2001 up to this date. As in the Warner Brothers show, *True Blood* takes place in an imaginary town—Bon Temps, in Louisiana—and describes a society in which humans know about the existence of vampire and both species can interact due to the creation of a type of synthetic blood designed by the Japanese. It deals with a large number of supernatural beings such as werewolves, shape shifters and fairies, but the vampires are in the core of the show. The main vampire characters, Bill Compton and Eric Northman, struggle to balance their vampire and human sides in addition to their personal fight for the love of Sookie, the human telepath who provides the point of view in the show/novels. *True Blood* has intense scenes of violence and sex, and is thus aimed at a more mature audience.

In terms of literature, the most famous vampires are the ones created by Bram Stoker, Anne Rice, and Stephenie Meyer. However, even though other vampires have not reached so much popularity as Dracula, Lestat, Louis and Edward, they have somehow helped to shape the contemporary vampire figure and spread its popularity. A little after Rice, American writer Chelsea Quinn Yarbro published *Hôtel Transylvania*, the first novel of the *Saint-Germain Cycle*, in 1978. Yarbro's narrative relies heavily on her studies of History, centering on

the figure of the vampire Count Saint-Germain. In Saint-Germain, readers find a vampire character that is constructed on similar ground to the Ricean vampires and the ones from *The Southern Vampires Mysteries/True Blood*.

In the literature recently produced, vampires have figured prominently in publications aimed at young readers. Following the trail of success left by *Twilight*, several authors have published stories featuring young-looking vampires in a teenage universe. It is possible to mention as an example P.C. Cast and Kristin Cast series *House of Night*, which so far account for nine published novels between 2007 up to the present day. The *House of Night* novels depict a world where vampires are not born, but marked as they reach puberty. The series deal with the journey of sixteen-year old Zoey Redbird as a new-born vampire (or fledgling) as she studies to understand and master her powers and responsibilities.

Another example that illustrates vampires as the leading characters of young adults' literature is Richelle Mead's *The Vampire Academy*. Mead's series comprise six novels published between 2007 and 2010. Depicting a vampire universe that is greatly influenced by Romanian folklore (as it will be explored in chapter 1), young Rosemary Hathaway is a damphir—a hybrid, the child of a vampire father and a human mother—who studies to be guardian, a type of bodyguard to important Moroi—the living vampires—who are the favorite targets of the Strigoi—the dead vampires. The relationship between Rose and her best friend Vasilisa Dragomir, a vampire princess, is in the core of the novels.

Even though it is possible to find vampires in different forms of popular culture today—and especially in visual culture—they originally come from literature. Vampires are one of the most prominent supernatural creatures of a literary form known as gothic literature, which appeared in the second half of the eighteenth century in Europe. Most of the first writers of gothic novels were from Great Britain, but as the genre became gradually more accepted by the public, writers of different nationalities started producing gothic tales. The genre eventually arrived in America, with acclaimed writers such as Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe in the nineteenth century and Stephen King in the twentieth century venturing stories that delved into the gothic universe.

2 The Best Is Yet to Come

The present research focuses on literatures in English, especially the literature produced in the United States and the United Kingdom. This investigation has the purpose of analyzing the transformations the vampire character has undergone throughout the years. The analysis of a selected group of vampire characters, both in terms of physical appearance and personality traits, is done with the intention of demonstrating how these gothic creatures, that were first conceived as hateful, unpleasant beings, seem to be getting further away from the villainous nature to become sympathetic figures, capable of human feelings and social interaction. In other words, vampires seem to be more in accordance with the portrayal of heroes than with that of villains in recent renditions.

The group of vampires that form my body of research are Dracula, from Bram Stoker's novel, Lestat and Louis, from *Interview with the Vampire*, and Edward Cullen from *Twilight*. I justify the choice of the four vampire characters that form my corpus according to their importance to vampire literature and also because I understand these four characters form a gradual line of transformation of vampires, going from a villainous, evil portrayal of the early vampire novels to a more friendly personification of the so called creatures of the night. The contemporary vampire, it seems, has evolved to a type of character more in accordance to the virtue and romanticism that fictional heroes embody.

In the attempt to reach relevant conclusions concerning the issue of the contemporary vampire character and its relationship with heroism, four research questions guided the process of analysis:

1. What are the most important characteristics of the fictional hero in Western literature?
2. What are the most important characteristics of the traditional vampire character?
3. Is the vampire a villain or a hero?
4. If the contemporary vampire character can be defined as a hero, can he also be considered as a Romantic hero?

The process of writing "Falling for Lions" is basically a process of reading and researching. As the reader will notice in the pages that follow, I chose to organize my thesis in three chapters, in addition to an introduction and a conclusion. In the introduction, I go through some of the most familiar, important and/or outstanding depictions of vampires in different forms of popular culture, such as theatre, cinema, television

and literature. In the first chapter, I present a historical research that turned the vampire legend into folklore and then into fiction. In the second chapter, I analyze three of the vampires from my corpus—Dracula, Lestat, and Louis—hoping to demonstrate how they can be translated into a linear path of the transformation of the literary vampire. In the third chapter, I describe the last vampire of my corpus, Edward, and how the vampire can be understood as a hero. At last, in the conclusion, I offer readers my final remarks on the subject of vampire fiction and its recent depictions.

The phenomenon of the vampire popularity boosts the interest in investigating the theme. Even though an aura of seduction, mystery and power has always been associated with the figure of the vampire, the current acclaim it receives deserves, in my point of view, some scholarly acknowledgement. The contemporary vampire breaks new ground on the subject of vampire characterization. I state that what motivated me to write the present thesis was my attempt to understand the phenomenon that the *Twilight* novel illustrates. *Twilight* and its teenage vampire protagonist, Edward, evoke many debates among readers, and scholars and critics start to analyze the contributions of Meyer's fiction to the studies of both gothic and young adults' literature. Among all the feelings and discussions *Twilight* awakes in the audience, one statement seems to rise above all disputes: vampires will never be the same again.

CHAPTER ONE

VAMPIRES AND THE EARLY WRITINGS

1.1 Adam and Evil

Vampires, or at least some sort of vampirism, are part of the system of beliefs of many cultures. Stories with cursed beings, who worship the Devil and relish blood, go back to thousands of years. Alexandre Meireles da Silva, in his introductions to the Brazilian Portuguese versions of Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* and the collection of vampire short stories *Contos Clássicos de Vampiro*, goes back as far as Babylonian, and Jewish writings, Greek mythology as well as Oriental legends to trace the origin of the vampire myth. From the different legends da Silva gathered to write about the beginning of vampirism, the stories concerning Lilith, Lamia, and Langsuyar stand out.

According to da Silva, the first mention to the figure of Lilith is presented in an ancient Babylonian writing called Gilgamesh, circa 2000 B.C. However, Lilith is better known because of the Jewish book of laws and traditions, the Talmud. In the Talmud, Lilith appears as Adam's first wife. It is said that Lilith constantly defied Adam's authority, mostly in regards to sex. Lilith refused to play a submissive sexual role and eventually left her husband. As punishment, God killed

her offspring, and transformed her into a monster that could only come out at night. Afterwards, Lilith started sucking the blood of Adam's heirs, causing their deaths. Her act was intended both to show her jealousy of Eve and to avenge God.

From Greek mythology springs the story of Lamia. The Greeks believe that Lamia used to be the queen of Libya and that she had a romantic relationship with Zeus, god of all Gods. His wife, Hera, was enraged with Zeus's betrayal and deprived Lamia of her sons with the God. Lamia became mad and retreated to exile and started to attack children, sucking all the blood from their bodies. In time, Lamia went through a physical transformation, becoming a sort of female demon. Conversely, Lamia was able to change her appearance and, in order to lure young men, she would often take the form of a beautiful maiden. The story of Lamia and her seductive skills were the inspiration for the English poet John Keats to write the poem "Lamia", in 1820. In the poem, Lamia falls in love with a mortal man, Lucius, and seeks redemption. However, the story ends badly for the doomed couple.

The legend of the Langsuyar has Malaysian's origins. The Langsuyar is a mythical being with wings, but it was first a woman devastated with the death of her newborn child. It was grief that led the transformation from woman to a monstrous creature. The Malaysian legends tell that the Langsuyar hide among trees and prey on children, sucking their blood through two small holes made in their throats. It is believed that women who die at giving birth have strong chances of coming back to life as a Langsuyar. They go back to their villages or communities, remarrying, and are even able to conceive again.

The stories of Lilith, Lamia, and Langsuyar, among others, greatly contributed to the formation and spread of the vampire lore that one can find in different folklores around the world. It was basically to folklore that fiction would turn as a source of inspiration to develop stories about revenants. In *The Everything Vampire Book*, by Barb Karg, Arjean Spaite, and Rick Sutherland, a revenant is an “individual who returns from the dead” (8). Tales of revenants are especially prolific in the folklore of Eastern Europe, in countries such as Slovakia, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Russia and Romania.

In the rural areas of Slovakia and the Czech Republic, the local folklore describe tales of the creatures *upir* and *nelapsi*. Karg, Spaite and Sutherland define these creatures as “the revived and rooting corpses of the recently deceased” (13). *Upirs* and *nelapis* spread diseases, and kill their victims by sucking the blood from their bodies. *Upirs* and *nelapis* are also said to possess an “evil eye”, and a simple stare from them can also bring death. Once the local dwellers are able to identify one of these beings they try to protect themselves by driving a stake through their heart, and/or burning their corpses.

In Bulgaria, the figure of the *vampir* emerges in local folklore. A *vampir* is “a deceased human who returns to life from the grave, maintaining every physical evidence of its former existence as a perfectly healthy human” (*The Everything Vampire Book* 13-14). The *vampir* is said to lead an ordinary life by day while spreading terror by night. Religious beliefs in Bulgaria affirm that people who lead sinful lives are possible candidates to become vampires after their deaths. Also, those who do not receive a proper burial, obeying to all the Christian rituals, are in danger of dwelling on earth as undeads.

In Russia, the vampire is known as the *uppyr*. The *uppyr* bears great resemblance to the Bulgarian *vampir* insofar as it is also associated to what the Russian Orthodox Church believes to be a reproachful behavior in life. In addition to common “sins” like drunkenness or sexual libertinage, those who practice witchcraft can possibly become vampires after the end of their mortal lives. Through many years, the Russian Church have used the figure of the *uppyr* to reinforce the benefits of leading a righteous life, according to the laws of religion, as a guarantee to the salvation of one’s soul.

At last, Romania is the country in which the vampire folklore spread the most. In the region of Transylvania, the vampire is found in two forms: the *strigoi vii*—a living vampire—and the *strigoi mort*—a dead vampire. Karg, Spaite and Sutherland point out that

the term *strigoi* (also spelled *strigoi*) is taken from the word *striga*, or which, entities who are doomed to become vampires after death. In legend, the association between witches and vampires is clear, with the *strigoi vii* and the *strigoi mort* believed to gather at night to plot against the living. The *strigoi mort* are the deadliest of the Romanian vampires and will return from the grave to suck the lifeblood of their families and livestock before eventually moving on to attack neighbors in their village (16).

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, the Romanian folklore provided the inspiration for American author Richelle Meade to write her young adults’ series *The Vampire Academy*. In Meade’s novels, the *strigoi* are one of the two races of vampires that inhabit the world. They are much alike the *strigoi mort*, the dead vampires. However, they were once living vampires—or *Moroi*, as Meade defines

them, and turned into strigoi by killing their victims during the act of drinking blood.

The belief in the existence of supernatural beings, although extremely disseminated in Eastern Europe lore, is by no means exclusive of that part of the world. Such preternatural beings are able to provoke fear, but they also carry the component of fascination. In the introduction to chapter two of their book, Karg, Spaitte and Sutherland argue that “part of that fascination may be attributed to our fervent multicultural and multireligious views that there is—with little doubt and even less scientific evidence—life after death”. Throughout the centuries, different authors would make use of the fear and fascination of the unknown to create the stories the vampire inhabits, and are so popular in contemporary culture.

1.2 Dead Man Walking

In addition to the supernatural beings from folklore, the accounts of the so called “real life vampires” also impacted the renditions of the literary vampire. Those who wish to study the facts and fiction concerning vampires must not disregard the influence of certain crime and murder episodes that stood out for the brutality and bloodlust with which they were committed. The narratives that follow, telling the tales of Arnold Paole, Countess Elizabeth Bathory and Vlad Dracula, are some of the most awe inspiring examples that arguably shed light upon the origins of the vampire character in fiction.

The peculiar case of Arnold Paole demands the attention of those interested in studying the myth of vampires. Paole’s history is told

in *Visum et Repertum*, published in 1732. Johannes Fluchinger, a military surgeon from Austria, was the man responsible for the investigation of the strange events that took place in Serbia. According to the pieces of information Fluchinger gathered, Paole was responsible for the death of seventeen people in 1731. An ex-soldier, he was allegedly attacked by a vampire in Greece. After falling off a hay wagon and dying, Paole came back to Serbia as a revenant. His body was taken out of the grave, and as it did not present signs of decay, and blood could be seen running off the corner of the corpse's mouth, Paole was officially credited as a vampire. He was then beheaded, and finally burned. Paole's case soon spread across Europe, encouraging debates about the existence of real vampires.

Elizabeth Bathory, or the Bloody Countess, as History remembers her, was born in 1560 in a prominent Hungarian family. During her lifetime, she was responsible for the killing of about six hundred and fifty young female servants. The Bloody Countess believed that if she bathed in the blood of her maidens she herself would look young for a longer time. It is said that Bathory was a sadistic woman who enjoyed torturing her servants before brutally murdering them. In fact, many of the torture techniques the Bloody Countess used were learnt from her husband, Hungarian aristocrat Ferenc Nadasdy, whom she married in 1575.

When the Bathory castle was so full of blood-drained bodies and the smell of putrefaction became unbearable, some servants disposed of the corpses, throwing them out in the open fields. It did not take long for the local villagers to start thinking that vampires had attacked those people. Eventually, the Bloody Countess grew tired of molesting her

servants and began attacking young ladies from her social circle. It was then that the authorities could no longer leave all the atrocities that Bathory had committed unattended. The countess was taken to trial in 1611. Due to her nobility, Bathory's life was spared. However, she was sentenced never to leave Castle Cachtice, her main property, for her remaining years. Elizabeth Bathory died in her room in August, 1614.

It is, however, two centuries prior to Elizabeth Bathory and Arnold Paole that lays the most emblematic human influence to vampire fiction: Vlad Dracula. In their book *In Search of Dracula*, scholars Raymond T. McNally and Radu Florescu write that Dracula was born in 1431 in Transylvania, a territory that today is part of Romania. He was the son of Moldavian princess Cneajna and Vlad Dracul, an authority figure in their town, Schassburg. He had a younger brother, Radu the Handsome, and many half-siblings. Dracula's family, as the whole of Transylvania, was subjected to the Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund of Luxembourg.

McNally and Florescu point out that prior to Dracula's birth, Emperor Sigismund created the Order of the Dragon, a military and religious fellowship, and invited Vlad Dracul to take part in it. According to the authors, the Order of the Dragon had two specific objectives: to protect the Catholic Church, and to foment a crusade against the increasing menace of the Turks. It was after entering the Order that Vlad Dracul was able to conquer the throne of the Wallachian principality. Historically, the region of Wallachia has always been associated with Transylvania. These events took place during the years of 1436 and 1437.

Still in 1437, the Emperor died and the Turks seized the opportunity to attack the Christian territories once more. In 1444, an epic battle known as the Battle of Varna took place in Bulgaria. After diplomatic negotiations between Vlad Dracul and Murad, the Ottoman-Turkish sultan, Dracula's father was able to keep his regency in Wallachia, promising to remain loyal to the sultan, and sending his two young sons to be brought up in the Turkish Empire, assuring the alliance. The years Vlad Dracula spent in the Turkish Court with his brother Radu would have a profound impact on him and would also help form the personality of this future Romanian leader.

During the time Dracula spent under the sultan's powers, the contrast between him and his brother became clear. While Radu meekly surrendered to the Turkish traditions and even adopted the Islamic religion as his own, Dracula grew intolerant, insubordinate, and treacherous with the passing of time. McNally and Florescu observe that

[Dracula's] years of Turkish imprisonment offer a clue to his shifty nature and perverse personality. From that time onward Dracula held human nature in low esteem. Life was cheap—after all, his own life was in danger should his father prove disloyal to the sultan—and morality was not essential in matters of state (21).

Meanwhile, Vlad Dracul's feeble attempts to balance his loyalty to the Roman and Turkish Empires backfired in 1447. That year, the leader of the Hungarian Empire, Janos Hunyadi marched to Wallachia and murdered Vlad Dracul. The turn of events led Vlad Dracula to pursue that which he believed to be his birthright: the Wallachian throne.

Dracula came back to Wallachia with the help of the Turks in 1448. Back in his home country, Dracula was under the tutorship of

Hunyardi, remaining his pupil until 1456. After Hunyardi's death, Dracula was ahead of an army of thousands of men who spread terror and death throughout Transylvania, and became the prince of Wallachia. In fact, he was the sovereign of Wallachia on three different occasions during his lifetime. Even though Dracula was acknowledged as a witty politician, he was better known as a brutal killer, who relished in inflicting pain to his prisoners, and his favorite form of torture: impalement.¹ Dracula's bad reputation is due mainly to the tales the Saxons used to spread about him, first in the Germanic region, until it reached the rest of the European continent, and then the rest of the world.

Dracula died in battle in 1476, near the city of Bucharest. It is said that he was then beheaded and buried in Snagov, a place that became well sought for those want to know more about this historical Romanian figure. Up to this day, Dracula is still remembered in popular ballads sung by local peasants, especially those who live in the whereabouts of his famous castle. It is worth mentioning that, in Romanian folklore, Dracula is not understood as a gruesome villain as the Saxons would have it. In many tales and ballads, as McNally and Florescu point out, Dracula was regarded as a type of "Robin Hood", acting fiercely with the powerful boyars, but helping the poor whenever they were in need. The Wallachian prince is undoubtedly the main source of inspiration for Bram Stoker to create his iconic vampire

¹ Impalement was a hideous form of torture and execution, and it became Vlad Dracula's hallmark death sentence. A sharpened stake was forced through a victim's body, often with the use of ropes and horses, and then mounted into the earth vertically with the body dangling from above. Although the shock of such horrific abuse was enough to kill almost instantly, Dracula's minions took great care to perfect the "art" of impaling in order to prolong the agony as long as possible—sometimes for days (*The Everything Vampire Book* 58).

Dracula in 1897, a character that combines the real life of Vlad Dracula and the existing legends from this same region.

The real life cases of Arnold Paole, and especially Elizabeth Bathory and Vlad Dracula would later exert great influence in the creation of literary vampires. The aristocratic, noble background that both Bathory and Dracula presented played a significant role in the construction of the vampire characters. The vampire as an aristocrat is a tradition that begun with the first literary vampire in English literature, Lord Ruthven, from John Polidori's short story "The Vampyre". Afterwards, such characteristic would also be explored in the writings of Bram Stoker, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, and Anne Rice, among other authors of vampire fiction.

1.3 Suck on the Jugular

As the vampire is part of the lore of many different cultures, an ultimate definition of the term is hard to find. Conversely, Otto Penzler, the editor of the collection of vampire short stories *Bloodsuckers: The Vampire Archives Volume 1*, offers a tentative description that suits most of the night creatures. In the introduction to *Bloodsuckers*, Penzler claims that a vampire

is an immortal bloodsucking creature with supernatural powers, able to transform itself into other natural forms, such as a bat, a wolf, or other animal. It sleeps during daylight hours, usually in a coffin or a grave, and arises to prey when darkness falls, or when the moon rises, usually by biting a neck and drinking its victim's blood (vii).

Such definition encompasses some of the characteristics that are common to most literary vampires. Surely, the characteristics might change according to an author's imagination and understanding of a vampire as well as the medium in which the vampire is portrayed.

The first feature that practically all vampires share in the written fiction is their ability to cause fear in humans. Karg, Spait, and Sutherland claim that "fear is a powerful proponent within the human psyche, one that—like a vampire—feeds off our imagination" (77). The fact that the prototype vampires from folklore were constantly depictions of gruesome beings only contributes to the negative connotation of the vampire figure in the human minds. The vampire enjoys and extensively uses its ability to cause fear on people when they prey upon humankind. The authors of *The Everything Vampire Book* go on to say that "to actually see a vampire encircle its prey in a frenzied attack or enact a slow, macabre courtship, then ultimately watch as its fangs pierce through exposed skin, leaves a lasting impression both literally and figuratively" (78).

Vampires are also frequently described as having the power of hypnosis. The hypnosis serves basically to two main purposes. First, it makes a victim more susceptible to a vampire attack and feeding. Second, the vampire can take advantage of the victim's state of trance and make them do as the creature pleases. Dracula is an example of a vampire that heavily relies on his power of hypnosis, as it will be discussed on Chapter 2. More recently the vampires from the series *The Vampire Diaries* and *The Vampire Academy* make use of hypnosis, which is referred to as compulsion. However, in the world of *The*

Vampire Academy, the use of compulsion is considered a *tabu*, being thus not well seen, especially when vampires use it on their own kind.

The issues of native soil and coffins play a significant role in vampire lore. Both are related to a vampire's sleeping habits. Traditionally, a vampire sleeps during the daylight hours. As more vampire stories appeared, the coffin was replaced by other devices such as boxes or any safe place that a vampire could bury itself and rest until rising again at sunset. In another traditional maneuver, a vampire could only fall asleep while around their native soil. Sometimes, according to legends and portrayals, the homeland or the earth from the place the vampire was first buried could be understood as a vampire's native soil.

More often than not, the vampire is associated with animals. Such characteristic, as Karg, Spaite, and Sutherland point out, was more common in the prototype vampire from folklore, but animals such as the wolf, the cat, and mostly the bat are elements of the vampire tradition. Da Silva argues that a vampire's ability to turn itself into an animal was first portrayed in Le Fanu's *Carmilla*. In the novella, the female vampire could become a cat. Da Silva also mentions that the cat is easily found in vampire fiction due to an ancient Greek belief that a person would turn into a vampire if a cat jumped over the corpse before the funeral. Moreover, the frequent association between vampire and bats is understandable insofar as one can find in nature species of bats that feed on the blood of other animals.

The matter of strength is pertinent to practically all vampires in literature. They are often portrayed as possessing not only physical strength but also psychological strength. The vampire's physical strength is superior to a human's, sometimes a dozen humans'

combined. Generally, the older a vampire is, the stronger it gets. The physical strength allows the vampire to successfully prey upon their victims, and avoid the risk of getting caught. An example of a vampire's psychological strength is their ability to endure some sunlight, which is harmful to them, and can lead to death. Apart from age, a vampire's strength is associated with the amount of blood they consume: the more blood vampires have in their organism, the stronger they feel.

In order to feed on blood, a vampire must penetrate a victim's flesh with their fangs. Spaite, Karg and Sutherland describe the vampire's fangs as

[...] sharp, elongated canine teeth, which when bared are a gruesome and intimately brutal way to achieve sustenance. At their best, fangs most obviously equate vampires to animals, in particular wolves, rats, and snakes. At their worst, they act as an efficient mechanism for tearing apart their meals (89).

The authors also claim that the development of fangs is credited to the association between vampires and werewolves. The use of fangs to feed on humans was considered an erotic act since early writings of vampire fiction. Thus, the vampire as a sexual character is highly common. The vampires of *True Blood* make the association of feeding and having sexual relations very clear and the two actions are frequently combined. However, it was Yarbro's St. Germain the vampire responsible for turning the bite of one's neck a sexual act. Margaret L. Carter writes in her essay "The Vampire" that:

to Saint-Germain, the taking of blood is an erotic experience, making this character the quintessential demon lover. Drinking blood offers him no satisfaction unless his partner attains sexual fulfillment. Hence he becomes the

immediate ancestor of numerous sympathetic vampire protagonists who exhibit a ravishing sensuality that particularly appeals to the female reader (629).

The most important characteristic of a vampire is the need to drink blood. All vampires have this characteristic in common. It is their source of energy. In fact, one sentence that is commonly found in vampire tradition is “the blood is the life”², which is a reference to a biblical passage. Da Silva argues that since the beginning of mankind, blood has been used in different rituals in the name of different beliefs and purposes. The author also evidences the connection between blood and soul, a connection that could explain the need of a vampire to feed on blood: by taking the blood of a human, the vampire would also be attempting to access the human soul it no longer possesses. Thus, by saying that “the blood is the life”, vampires are arguably affronting God for their existence which is neither real life nor true death.

It is possible to kill a vampire, even though such action is extremely hard. The most common form to bring death to one of these creatures is to thrust a stake through their heart. The stake can be made of wood or silver, depending on the tradition. Another well-known method is to expose a vampire to sunlight. The long exposure to the sun causes the vampire to burn until it turns to a pile of ashes. In many stories, the vampire is exterminated through the combination of different tactics in a sequence. First, the vampire is staked and paralyzed. Second, it is beheaded and the corpse is finally burned. Religious artifacts such

² The Bible passage reads “Only be sure that you do not eat the blood: for the blood is the life; and you may not eat the life with the flesh” (Deuteronomy 12:23).

as holy water, the wafer, and the cross can be effective devices to repel a vampire attack, but they hardly ever are described as being capable of actually killing a vampire.

1.4 Believe in the Supernatural

The vampire character is found in the realm of gothic literature. Elizabeth MacAndrew, who discussed the aspects of the gothic in her book *The Gothic Tradition in Fiction*, understands gothic fiction as “a literature of nightmare” (3). It is also, according to the author, a form of fiction that explores the nature of evil in the human mind. It has an educational purpose: because gothic fiction deals with the darkest side of people, it teaches the audience to recognize hideous behavior and avoid it, therefore encouraging virtue and goodness (4-5). Another strong component of gothic fiction is the matter of fear. H. P. Lovecraft acknowledges in his work *Supernatural Horror in Literature* that “the oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown” (12). Vampire fiction is one of the types of gothic fiction that most explore fear.

The first gothic work was *The Castle of Otranto*, an English novel written by Horace Walpole and published in 1764. *Otranto* is a milestone for gothic fiction, as it makes use of devices and techniques in regards to setting, themes and character construction that other gothic writers would later explore and develop. In terms of character, X.J. Kennedy briefly defines this element of fiction as “an imagined person who inhabits a story” (*Literature* 43). In *Aspects of the Novel*, E. M.

Forster contrasts humans—*homo sapiens*—, and characters—*homo fictus*—to state that

[character] is generally born off, he is capable of dying on, he wants little food or sleep, he is tirelessly occupied with human relationships. And—most important—we can know more about him that we can know about any of our fellow creatures, because his creator and narrator are one (56).

MacAndrew comments that the gothic novels present basically two types of characters: the pair hero/heroine, and the villain. Gothic literature has much in common with the sentimental novels in regards to the portrayal of its heroes and heroines. Physically they are often portrayed as fair and beautiful. The hero/heroine usually lives in the countryside, which gothic literature associates with purity, whereas the city is the place of corruption. It is thus in the city where the villain is more likely to be found. The sentimental novel tends to explore what the characters think instead of what they do. Hence, the sentimental hero and heroine become victims of the gothic villain, one of the greatest contributions gothic fiction has made to literature in terms of characterization.

The author observes that villains can be divided into three major categories. The first type of villain is the one who embodies the obscure side of the human mind. He is wicked, demoniac and seeks the hero's destruction. The second type of villain is the antagonist of the story. This character opposes the hero somehow and, although it is not entirely corrupted as the first type, this villain reflects darkness in opposition to the light that emanates from the hero. The third type of villain is the one who tends to be the most explored in Gothic fiction: the villain/hero—a

character that embodies both virtue and vice. Manfred, the main character of *The Castle of Otranto*, is an example of character that falls into the villain/hero category.

The heroes and villains along with supernatural creatures as monsters, ghosts, werewolves and doubles populate the pages of gothic novels. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) are some examples of novels with exquisite characters the gothic has created and stand through time in readers' imagination. Vampires can be added to the realm of such fascinating supernatural characters. The literary vampire first appeared in Germany, in the 1748 poem "Der Vampir", by Heinrich August Ossenfelder. Almost a hundred years later, the vampire would appear in English literature for the first time.

The first vampire from English literature is Lord Ruthven, from John Polidori's short story "The Vampyre" in 1819. "The Vampyre" was first published in *The New Monthly Magazine* and it was first believed to have been written by Lord Byron. The short story was created in a summer night at Villa Diodati, Byron's property in Switzerland. To entertain his guests, among whom were poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, his bride to be, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin—who would later adopt her husband's name—and Polidori himself, Byron's personal physician, it is said that Byron proposed a game, and each guest should come up with the scariest horror story possible. Polidori then created his vampire tale and Godwin started working on her earlier drafts of *Frankenstein*.

Lord Ruthven is said to bear remarkable resemblances to Lord Byron. At a certain occasion, novelist Lady Caroline Lamb, one of Byron's lovers, remarked that the poet was "bad, mad and dangerous to know". Such features definitely applied to the aristocratic figure Polidori conceived. Lord Ruthven thrives on the fascination he causes in London society, using his charm to seduce, manipulate and kill his prey. The novel's hero, Aubrey, is the perfect embodiment of the sentimental hero: young, naïve, and easily overwhelmed by the villain's exuberance. Aubrey discovers too late that Ruthven is not an ordinary man and cannot save his sister from her marriage to the vampire. Aubrey eventually dies but manages to expose Ruthven's true nature.

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, a novella from 1872, is another prominent work of fiction from the early vampire literature. The novella is set in the distant land of Styria, Austria, where young Laura, the heroine, lives in a castle with her father and servants. Laura is also responsible for providing the point of view of the story. Laura and her father take Carmilla to their castle after what they think was a chance meeting on a road. A strong bond is soon formed between the two girls and everyone in the castle is mesmerized with the guest. Laura describes Carmilla, who is believed to belong from an old noble family, as

[...] above the middle height of women. [...] She was slender, and wonderfully graceful. Except that her movements were languid—very languid. [...] Her complexion was rich and brilliant; her features were small and beautifully formed; her eyes large, dark, and lustrous; her hair was quite wonderful; I never saw hair so magnificent thick and long when it was down about her shoulders; [...] It was exquisitely fine and soft, and in color a rich very dark brown, with something of gold (269-270).

Carmilla's true colors become more evident with the progression of the story, and Laura feels constantly ill. Carmilla drains her off a little blood every night. Eventually, Carmilla is found resting in her coffin and a stake is pierced through her heart, bringing true death to the vampire. One of the most discussed contributions of *Carmilla* to vampire literature is the homoerotic relationship between the vampire and Laura. At a certain point of the narrative Laura reveals to the readers that

[She] felt rather unaccountably towards the beautiful stranger. I did feel, as she said, "drawn towards her", but there was also something of repulsion. In this ambiguous feeling, however, the sense of attraction immensely prevailed. She interested and won me; she was so beautiful and so indescribably engaging (268).

The issue of lesbianism would later be part of most vampire stories in which the creature is female. Carmilla Karnstein earned her place in vampire fiction, being the strongest influence to many of the female vampires that followed.

Vampire fiction flourished in the nineteenth century, increasingly gaining acceptance by the audience. The tales that invariably made use of the themes of death and love started to attract readers with its intoxicating mingle of seduction and fear. John Polidori's "The Vampyre" and Le Fanu's *Carmilla* established many vampire conventions that future writers would incorporate and explore in their fiction. Through the course of many years, both "The Vampyre" and *Carmilla* were the starting point to understand the vampire character

and its portrayal, but then something happened. Then there was *Dracula*.

CHAPTER TWO

THE VAMPIRE PORTRAYAL IN *DRACULA* AND *INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE*

2.1 Say Hi to the Bad Guy

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is the masterpiece of vampire literature. The 1897 novel achieved such status as it consolidated many conventions that future vampire fictions would appropriate, develop, or question. In *Dracula*, Stoker created a character that is, according to McNally and Florescu, the juxtaposition of the historical figure—Vlad Dracula, the Wallachian prince who lived in the fifteenth century—and the bloodsucker being from the Romanian lore. Throughout the novel, the vampire Dracula is also referred to as “un-Dead”, “foul Thing”, “terrible Being”, “King Vampire”, and “man-that-was”. The negative references to the vampire character present evidence that Stoker portrayed a vampire that humans should fear and avoid.

Dracula makes use of a typical gothic device, which is the narrative through a series of letters, journal and diary inscriptions to put together by the other characters from the novel. An interesting aspect of *Dracula* is that even though the vampire character is in the core of the novel, representing the evil force that must be overpowered, he is rarely present inside the narrative. Therefore, readers must rely on the accounts

of the group of people who banded together to destroy the vampire in order to know and understand the vampire's actions and motifs. In this sense, Professor Abraham Van Helsing, Jonathan and Mina Harker, John Seward, Arthur Holmwood and Quincey Morris are not only be responsible for fighting the vampire but also for guiding the readers into the dark universe which the creature inhabits.

It is Professor Van Helsing who illuminates the other characters, and the readers in regards to Dracula's background. During his human life, Dracula was part of a noble and important family that became famous by defending their lands against the Turkish attacks. His peers considered the man to be brave and a great warrior. However, Dracula was also known for his dealings with necromancy and other forms of dark sciences. It was even believed that Dracula could communicate with Satan, who was referred to as "the Evil One", and allegedly transformed Dracula into a vampire. The probable association between the vampire and Satan would be plausible taking into account a Christian point of view. James B. Twitchell claimed in his book *Dreadful Pleasures* that "aside from the devil, the vampire is the most popular malefactor in Christianity. In fact, the competition is unfair, not just because the vampire is now probably more popular, but because the vampire really *is* the devil" (106).

The connection between the vampire and the devil leaves little room for an interpretation of Dracula as anything other than a villain. Going back to MacAndrew's classification of villains in Gothic literature, Dracula would fall into the first category: the type of villain that is pure evil. In addition, Dracula "cannot die, but must go on age after age adding new victims and multiplying the evils of the world"

(*Dracula* 257). Van Helsing's choice of words to describe Dracula's way of acting contributes to the understanding of Dracula as the villain who intends to destroy and cause harm to others. Dracula as the villain who wanted to vanquish the hero is another facet of the vampire that was explored, especially during the four first chapters of the novel, in which the action takes place in Castle Dracula in Transylvania.

Even though Dracula is no longer a man, he still considers himself the Transylvanian noble he once was. He is described as someone who takes great pride in the achievements of his family and his people. Dracula also seems to miss his old days of glory and this feeling leads to that which seems to be the predominant aspect of the vampire's personality: revenge. The vampire's actions throughout the novel seem intended to take revenge on a society that evolved and left no place for the type of man Dracula was prepared to be. Thus, Stoker's vampire portrays a character that is an outcast, a foreigner, a minority. In many ways, in spite of all the changes vampires have undergone, the sense of otherness is still very much associated with these creatures.

In the beginning of the novel, the English solicitor Jonathan Harker is sent to Transylvania to make business with a local aristocrat, Count Dracula. Right from the start, the rational, western mind of Harker would contrast with the superstitions of the people from the East. The Transylvanians are described as people who believe in the forces of the supernatural, and even though it is not clear whether or not they know Dracula is a vampire, they most certainly know the Count is not an ordinary man. The locals are afraid for Harker, and try to convince the Englishman to give up his intentions of going to the Castle. As their insistence turns out to be useless, the locals offer Harker gifts that they

believe would keep the man safe. Among such gifts is a small crucifix. Analyzing the story, Jonathan Harker is the perfect hero to fall prey to the schemes of the villain: he is young, handsome, gentle, and would do anything to keep his beloved one safe. The villain, obviously, is aware of all of that.

Dracula wishes to move to England, and therefore, needs to purchase a property in the country. Harker goes to Transylvania to close the business. At first, Dracula presents himself as a formidable host, but soon Harker finds out he is in a dangerous situation. First, the young man starts to notice some odd facts about the Count: he never eats or drinks, he does not have any servants despite his noble status, the Count only makes himself present during night time, and there seems to be no mirrors in the castle. The absence of mirrors can be explained due to the fact that it is a common feature in vampire lore that these creatures cannot cast a reflection. However, at that moment, Harker does not know who he is dealing with. The issue of the mirror leads Harker to be involved in a preternatural situation while he is shaving with the help of a small piece of glass he had brought with him:

Suddenly I felt a hand on my shoulder [...] I started, for it amazed me that I had not seen him, since the reflection of the glass covered the whole room behind me. In starting I had cut myself slightly, but did not notice it at the moment. Having answered the Count's salutation, I turned to the glass again to see how I had been mistaken. This time there could be no error, for the man was close to me, and I could not see him over my shoulder. But there was no reflection of him in the mirror! The whole room behind me was displayed; but there was no sign of a man in it, except myself (37).

The oddities that Harker perceives start to bother him, and he tries to leave the castle only to find out he is a prisoner. At this point of the narrative the villain victimizes the young hero: Harker is lied to, held against his will, menaced and psychologically tortured. The young man does not know whether everything he had seen is real or a product of his imagination. Harker's doubts are only aggravated as he, exploring the castle to find an exit, has a dreamlike encounter with three women who want to seduce and to feed on him. These women, whose relationship with Dracula is never clarified, seem to be the only other ones living in the castle.

It is also through Jonathan Harker that readers have their first physical description of Dracula. After seeing the Count, Harker writes in his journal:

Within, stood a tall old man, clean-shaven save for a long white moustache, and clad in black from head to foot, without a single speck of colour about him anywhere [...] His face was a strong—a very strong—aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils; with lofty domed forehead, and hair growing scantily round the temples, but profusely elsewhere. His eyebrows were very massive, almost meeting over the nose, and with bushy hair that seemed to curl in its own profusion. The mouth, so far as I could see under the heavy moustache, was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp white teeth; these protruded over the lips, whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years. For the rest, his ears were pale and at the tops extremely pointed; the chin was broad and strong, and the cheeks firm though thin. The general effect was one of extraordinary pallor. Hitherto I had noticed the backs of his hands as they lay on his knees in the firelight, and they had seemed rather white and fine; but seeing them now close to me, I could not but notice that

they were rather coarse—broad, with squat fingers. Strange to say, there were hairs in the centre of the palm (25; 28-29)

From the description Harker provides, one can infer that Stoker created a vampire character that invites people to fear it. The vampire's wardrobe—predominantly black—would later be incorporated into other vampire works of fiction, constituting a sort of trading mark for the vampire character. The use of black would only be challenged in more recent times, in which vampire stories gained a new approach. As the vast majority of vampires, Dracula has pale skin and prominent canine teeth. Apart from that, the possession of hair in the palm of the hands could demonstrate Dracula's connection to the wolf, an animal that the Count is able to transform into, and also control.

The figure of Dracula is almost always attached to the castle he inhabited. The historical Dracula used to live in the Poenari Castle, situated close to the Arges River. Actually, the castle was little more than a fortress. The castle that Harker describes in his narrative is more similar to Castle Bran. MacNally and Florescu write that

with its vast halls, dark corridors, multilevel battlements, high water tower, numerous inner courtyards, Gothic chapel, and rustic Germanic period furnishings, Bran has an atmosphere which conveys, more than any other exciting castle in Romania, the legacy of the age of Dracula. In the middle of the inner courtyard lies a well, and next to it, hidden by a covering of stone, is a secret passage (63).

The castle plays an important role to the first part of the narrative. When gothic fiction was established as a tradition, one of its conventions was the singular use of the setting. Generally, in gothic

novels settings have a more active role, almost as if the setting was a character itself. Some excellent examples of the use of the setting as a narrative device are the mansion in which the twins Roderick and Madeleine live in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1840), and the Earnshaw property in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847). Castle Dracula joins these properties as one of the most significant settings in the realm of gothic fiction.

Castle Dracula is the symbol of the vampire's power and nature. It is the construction that allows Harker to understand that the count is indeed a preternatural being. Firstly, it allows Harker to witness Dracula's abilities:

But my very feeling changed to repulsion and terror when I saw the whole man slowly emerge from the window and begin to crawl down the castle wall over that dreadful abyss, *face* down, with his cloak spreading out around him like great wings. At first I could not believe my eyes. I thought it was some trick of the moonlight, some weird effect of shadow; but I kept looking, and it could be no delusion. I saw the fingers and toes grasp the corners of the stones, worn clear of the mortar by the stress of the years, and by thus using every projection and inequality move downwards with considerable speed, just as a lizard moves along a wall (47).

Secondly, after succeeding in entering Dracula's room, the solicitor finds a secret passage that leads to the discovering of Dracula's supernatural life. Harker sees lots of boxes containing earth, and soon realizes that they serve as "beds". The device of a box—or a coffin—filled with native soil as a place of rest to the vampire is one of the many conventions that were consolidated with *Dracula*.

There, in one of the great boxes, of which there were fifty in all, on a pile of newly dug earth, lay the Count! He was either dead or asleep, I could not say which - for the eyes open and stony, but without the glassiness of death - and the cheeks had the warmth of life through all their pallor, and the lips were as red as ever. But there was no sign of movement, no pulse, no breath, no beating of the hart. I bent over him, and tried to find any sign of life, but in vain. He could not have lain there long, for the earthy smell would have passed away in a few hours. By the side of the box was its cover, pierced with holes here and there. I thought he might have the keys on him, but when I went to search I saw the dead eyes, and in them, dead though they were, such a look of hate (63).

What happens to Jonathan after he realizes Dracula is a vampire—even though the man never uses such term while he was in the Count's company—is unclear. All that the narrative provides is the fact that Dracula leaves Harker behind and sails to England. Harker is later found recovering from fever and delirium in a hospital in Budapest, where his fiancée Mina Murray takes care of him and becomes his wife. Meanwhile, Dracula is on board of a ship called *Demeter*, where he lays in his box by day and terrorizes the crew by night. The events that take place in the *Demeter* are narrated by the ship's captain, who has a travel log. Regardless of the fact that the captain does not know he is dealing with a vampire, he—like Harker—knows that something preternatural is taking place. Through the accounts of the captain, the reader comes to know about the vampire's ability to turn into mist and control the weather.

In England, Dracula is able to show his power basically through his control over the character of Lucy Westenra. Lucy is a long time friend of Mina Murray, the future Mrs. Harker. Lucy is the object of

affection of Dr. John Seward, Arthur Holmwood, later Lord Godalming, and of the American colonialist Quincey Morris. Lucy eventually chooses the aristocrat Godalming to marry. The girl is the first one Dracula attacks in England. Through the device of hypnosis, the vampire is able to suck Lucy's blood in three different occasions, turning her into a vampire as well. Lucy is not aware that she is being attacked. She only shows signs of increasing weakness, which makes her fiancé seek the help of Dr. Seward and later of Dr. Van Helsing. The analysis of the novel leaves room for the possible interpretation that Dracula not only feeds on Lucy but also has sexual relations with the girl, an event that is possibly witnessed by Mina during her stay with Lucy in Whitby:

There was undoubtedly something, long and black, bending over the half-reclining white figure. I called in fright, 'Lucy! Lucy!' and something raised a head, and from where I was I could see a white face and red, gleaming eyes (113).

Dr. Van Helsing examines Lucy's condition and seeing the two small holes in her neck, soon realizes he is dealing with a supernatural force. The signs of Lucy's transformation are clear to the foreign doctor:

Whilst asleep she looked stronger, although more haggard, and her breathing was softer; her open mouth showed the pale gums drawn back from the teeth, which thus looked positively longer and sharper than usual (185).

Van Helsing tries to save Lucy by making her a necklace of garlic and spreading the condiment through her bedroom. The doctor also performs blood transfusions on the girl but those actions are not enough to save Lucy. She is buried in the churchyard grave, and soon after her death,

children start to disappear at night. They all present two small holes in their necks, as if an animal has bitten them, and they say they had a meeting with a woman they call the “Bloofer Lady”. “This is no jest, but life and death, perhaps more” (139), says Van Helsing about Lucy’s case.

Despite the fact that Van Helsing takes too long to come clean with Seward and Lucy’s other suitors, the difficulty those men present in accepting that they are facing a supernatural force is striking if one would compare their behavior with that of the journalist in *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) or of the teenager Bella in *Twilight* (2005). The men are only able to accept the truth of Van Helsing’s theory when they are recruited to go to the churchyard and give Lucy her “true death”. After confirming that Lucy is indeed responsible for attacking the children, they do not hesitate in killing the female vampire. In another contrast with the contemporary vampire narratives, in particular the teen novels, the realization that the beloved one is a supernatural being causes the affection to vanish, as Dr. Seward relates in his diary:

I shall cut off her head and fill her mouth with garlic, and I shall drive a stake through her body’. It made me shudder to think of so mutilating the body of the woman whom I had loved. And yet the feeling was not so strong as I had expected, I was, in fact, beginning to shudder at the presence of this being, this Un-Dead, as Van Helsing called it, and to loathe it. Is it possible that love is all subjective, or all objective? (241-242).

Although Dracula attacks Lucy, the analysis of the novel can lead to an interpretation that the vampire’s ultimate goal is to transform Mina. Mina is a character that more often than not is interpreted in

opposition to Lucy. The Westenra girl is arguably an easier victim and cannot be saved as she personifies a woman with patterns of behavior that are considered improper for her time. Twitchell writes about the girl: “Lucy, we recall, was a giddy child-woman whose naivité and zest for sexual excitement made her easy prey for Dracula’s appetite” (134). As for Mina, even though she marries Harker, she maintains her virginal air, remaining a “sweet-faced, dainty-looking girl” (*Dracula* 262). Mina is all along the devoted, virtuous wife, the all time heroine of the novel, hence a more valuable “prize” for the vampire.

Dracula tries to transform Mina making use of the same devices he uses with Lucy. In one of the most powerful passages of the novel, Jonathan narrates in his journal the moment he and the other men find the vampire in Mina’s room, giving her what Van Helsing calls the “Vampire’s baptism of blood” :

By her side stood a tall, thin man, clad in black. His face was turned from us, but the instant we saw it we recognized the Count – in every way, even to the scar on his forehead. With his left hand held both Mrs. Harker’s hands keeping them away with her arms at full tension; his right hand gripped her by the back of the neck, forcing her face down on his bosom. Her white nightdress was smeared with blood, and a thin stream trickled down the man’s bare breast, which was shown by his torn open dress. The attitude of the two had a terrible resemblance to a child forcing a kitten’s nose into a saucer of milk to compel it to drink. As we burst into the room, the Count turned his face, and the hellish look that I had heard described seemed to leap into it. His eyes flamed red with devilish passion; the great nostrils of the white aquiline nose open wide and quivered at the edges; and the white sharp teeth, behind the full lips of the blood-dripping mouth, champed together like those of a wild beast. (336)

The moment Dracula forces Mina to consume his blood, they form a bond. Van Helsing is able to hypnotize Mina to know the whereabouts of the vampire. It is eventually through the heroine that the group of men learns that Dracula is coming back to Transylvania, where the vampire is followed and killed by Jonathan.

Another character that is important to the understanding of Dracula is Renfield. Renfield is a patient at Dr. Seward's asylum. He is described as a zoophagous, that is, he consumes live animals and insects. Although it is not clear throughout the course of the narrative how the relationship between the vampire and the patient was first established, the progression of the story suggests that Renfield acts as if he is a servant to Dracula. His actions and his hunger for animals become more intense whenever the count is around. When Dr. Seward realizes the connection between Renfield's episodes of madness and Dracula's closeness, it becomes clear for him, Van Helsing and the other men when to hunt the vampire down. Renfield himself explains why he took up eating animals and is willing to do the vampire's bidding:

I used to fancy that life was a positive and perpetual entity, and that by consuming a multitude of live things, no matter how low in the scale of creation, one might indefinitely prolong life. At times I held the belief so strongly that I actually tried to take human life. The doctor here will bear me out that one occasion I tried to kill him for the purpose of strengthening my vital powers by the assimilation with my own body of his life through the medium of his blood-relying, of course, upon the Scriptural phrase, "For the blood is the life" (279-280).

The relationship between Dracula and his victims Renfield and Mina allows for the interpretation of novel and character from a Christian point of view. According to Susannah Clements, in her recent work *The Vampire Defanged*, “Dracula represents all of the forces that the cross must defeat” (15). The novel, which frequently makes reference to biblical passages, also contributes to the notion that Christian artifacts, such as the holy water, the host, and the crucifix itself can be used as means to protect oneself against the vampire as well as to “sanitize”, as Van Helsing says, the places where the vampire has been. Nonetheless, the association between the Christian faith and Dracula that Clements establishes renders the connection between Dracula and the Deadly Sins clear and meaningful.

Clements states that Dracula can be associated with all seven of the Deadly Sins in different degrees. Probably the easiest one to recognize in Dracula’s personality is his wrath. After Jonathan cuts himself with the razor he writes in his journal that “when the Count saw my face, his eyes blazed with a sort of demoniac fury, and he suddenly made a grab at my throat” (37). The large consumption of blood can indicate the count’s gluttony. As observed earlier, he takes great pride in his ancestry and envies the world in which he lives, for it no longer needs people like the man he used to be. Dracula’s greed can be portrayed in his strong volition to be the master of the people around him. Lust is present in connection to the possible sexual connotation of the act of taking the blood of a victim. Sloth, the most difficult sin to associate to the vampire, is arguably expressed in the time the vampire spends sleeping in the box full of earth.

For many years, *Dracula* remained as the ultimate vampire novel. Stoker's character, who is considered the father of all vampires, reigned alone in the realm of vampire fiction as the epitome of what a vampire should be: an embodiment of that which is evil, a devil's son, and a creature to be feared. Dracula certainly transposed the pages of the story we would forever live on to be reinvented in different forms of media, from theater to cartoons. His fame would only be shadowed almost a hundred years later with the apothecotic rise of Anne Rice and her mesmerizing vampires Lestat and Louis.

2.2 Sympathy for the Devil

Interview with the Vampire was the most influential vampire novel to be published since *Dracula*. Released in 1976, *Interview with the Vampire* is the first of a series of ten novels in addition to two independent short stories that account for American author Anne Rice's *The Vampire Chronicles*. *Interview* has an interesting narrative structure insofar as it gives the vampire character the opportunity to narrate on a first-person level the events of both his human and vampire lives. This vampire, Louis, tells his story in the form of an interview to a journalist, and it is through him that readers come to know not only the vampire narrator himself but also the one who transformed him. This is Lestat, the vampire who "did not have to be loved, but would not be ignored" (*Interview* 105). The enormous appeal of Lestat makes him a character that is hard to ignore, but readers may agree that he is incredibly easy to love. First of all, a significant characteristic of Lestat as a character is that, although he is not the protagonist of the novel, he is frequently

understood as the most powerful and remembered character of Rice's work. Such acknowledgment is remarkable due to the fact that in the first volume of *The Vampire Chronicles*, Lestat is very much absent in the narrative. Also, very little is known about his background, which had always been a sensitive subject to Louis. Louis is the character that readers need to accept as the reliable narrator of the tale being told. As the narrator, Louis has very few good things to say about his maker, contributing to the understating of the character of Lestat as a villain, even though it can be debated whether or not Lestat is a villain to the same extent as Dracula was.

What readers do come to know about Lestat is that he was born Lestat de Lioncourt in the eighteenth century from a family of the low aristocracy in France. He could not have been transformed into a vampire for a very long time because he still has his father, an old, sick man in need of care. In fact, his father might have been the reason why Lestat decides to transform Louis into a night creature. Louis has a substantial amount of money. As owner of two indigo plantations in Louisiana, the new born vampire lives in a large property. Probably moved by his greed, Lestat plots to turn Louis so he can control both man and his plantations.

A deeper analysis of Lestat's character may lead to the comprehension that Lestat is moved both by greed and a feeling of revenge towards his own father. Lestat feels resentful that his father did not support his childhood dream of becoming a priest, and his inclination to scholarly matters. Lestat's father did not consider those subjects to be of great consequence, never encouraging and even preventing the boy Lestat from studying. The boy grows bitter, and does

not hesitate in humiliating his father with the luxury and wealth of the Pointe du Lac plantation. On a given night, Lestat shouts at his father: “I take care of you, don’t I? I’ve put a better roof over your head than you ever put over mine! If I want to sleep all day and drink all night, I’ll do it, damn you!” (22-23).

As many of the mortal characters of vampire novels, Lestat’s father knows his son is not the boy he used to be, but does not know what exactly the problem is. At the verge of his death, he tries to atone for his past mistakes, and seeks his son’s forgiveness. He begs Lestat:

You were the gentlest of them all! God will forgive me if you forgive me. [...] You were Joseph among your brothers, the old man said. The best of them, but how was I to know? It was when you were gone I knew, when all those years passed and they could offer me no comfort, no solace. And then you came back to me and took me from the farm, but it wasn’t you. It wasn’t the same boy”. (55-56)

The father’s speech shows that Lestat was brought up in a family that valued the principles of Christianity. Lestat can probably be understood as a virtuous boy deeply hurt by his father’s decision. In other words, Lestat is someone capable of being good, but choosing to do evil.

The evil deeds Lestat is capable of doing are mostly expressed in his feeding habits. As any other vampire, Lestat needs blood to continue his existence. To the vampire, the act of sucking the blood and killing his victims are natural and he does so indiscriminately. Lestat defines himself as a cat, a predator who relishes in his preternatural speed and strength to seduce, toy around, and finally kill his prey. In terms of victims, it is said that Lestat has a preference for taking the life of young girls and boys. In such preference, it may be understood that

Lestat is taking his revenge. Being a young man himself by the time he was transformed, Lestat is denying his victims the chance of an existence that is no longer possible for him. Louis, and therefore the reader, comes to realize that, like Dracula, Lestat is an evil being moved by his consuming desire of revenge towards a type of life that could never be again.

If Lestat and Dracula are brought together in their mutual desire for revenge, the Ricean vampire greatly departs from his predecessor in terms of physical appearance. When telling the journalist about the vampire who transformed him, Louis describes Lestat as

a tall fair-skinned man with a mass of blond hair and a graceful, almost feline like quality to his movements [...] His grey eyes burned with an incandescence, and the long white hands which hung by his sides were not those of a human being. I think I knew everything in that instant, and all that he told me was only an aftermath. What I mean is, the moment I saw him, saw his extraordinary aura and knew him to be no creature I'd ever known, I reduced to nothing (13-14).

Although it is difficult for Lestat to pass for a common man, the description Louis provides to the readers describes a type of vampire with a more humanized appearance. Also, his physical appearance reinforces Lestat's image as a predator, who probably is not ashamed to use all his gracefulness to gain the trust of his victims only to dispatch them later.

I tend to believe that the immense appeal of Lestat amidst the vampire fiction audience is the result of his carefree way of living his immortal existence combined with the description of his hedonistic lifestyle. His love for the "good life" and money is often expressed

throughout the pages of *Interview*. In regards to money, Lestat is portrayed as character that is used to stealing from his victims, either giving the money to Louis for him to invest or indulging in his many luxuries like nice clothes and good food. Lestat also admires beauty, which might also account for his preference in killing young people and the way he treats Claudia, the vampire child he later transforms. At a certain point of the narrative, Louis reveals that Lestat

thought the best color at all times for vampires was black, possibly the only aesthetic principle he steadfastly maintained, but he wasn't opposed to anything which smacked of style and excess. He loved the great figure we cut, the three of us in our box at the new French Opera House or the Théâtre d'Orléans, to which we went as often as possible, Lestat having a passion for Shakespeare which surprised me, though he often dozed through the operas and woke just in time to invite some lovely lady to midnight supper, where he would use all his skill to make her love him totally, then dispatch her violently to heaven or hell and come home with her diamond ring to give to Claudia (99-100).

Interview with the Vampire is a novel that allows for an interpretation of the vampire's sexuality that is not necessarily attached with the act of sucking the blood out of the victim's body. Much has already been discussed about Lestat's sexual preferences. Dante Luiz de Lima, in his thesis entitled *Blood Eroticism in Interview with the Vampire: from Literature to the Audiovisual Domain* (2007), endorses the homosexuality of the Ricean vampires and shows how such condition is portrayed in both the novel and the filmic adaptation. Although one may infer Lestat's homosexuality, I would not limit either him or Louis to their potential sexual preferences. I feel inclined to

agree with Clements when she states that “Lestat [...] is defined by love. He falls in love quickly, passionately, and with both male and female characters” (51). I would go further and say that the “love” that defined Lestat was not only the potential romantic love, but also the love for the beautiful things of life.

Lestat is portrayed as so very fond of his preternatural powers that he feels that he could be compared to God: “God kills, and so shall we; indiscriminately. He takes the richest and the poorest, and so shall we” (88) says Lestat to Louis. The vampire feels as if he has the same power over human lives as God. The vampire, as a God, was able to decide who could live and who should die. At this point, *Interview with the Vampire* also allows for a Christian approach to the novel, not in the Manichaean way that *Dracula* poses it, but in presenting a character that feels to be equal to a deity. Surprisingly enough, when Lestat is betrayed by Claudia, and has his throat cut, the vampire claims for “God”. Whether it is an exclamation of mercy, help or surprise, it is not clear. Maybe a little bit of all three.

In spite of the attack he suffers, Lestat does not die. He lives to meet Claudia and Louis in France and claim his revenge against the vampire child. In the vampire universe, there is only one crime, and that crime is to kill another from the same species. When Claudia attempts against Lestat’s life she falls in disgrace. Claudia burns in the sun and Lestat thinks that, without Claudia, the life he led with Louis in the plantation, and later in New Orleans can be resumed. Little does Lestat know that Claudia’s death ultimately changes Louis’s outlook on their lives and that an existence as they had is not possible anymore. Lestat too seems to have been more affected by Claudia’s death than he

intended. The impact of the absence of Claudia and Louis in his life is mainly shown in the changes in his appearance, as Louis sees when, some years later, he finds Lestat back in America:

Lestat had his dry hands on mine now, drawing me towards him and towards the warmth, and I could see the tears welling in his eyes; and only when his mouth was stretched in a strange smile of desperate happiness that was near to pain did I see the faint traces of the old scars. How baffling and awful it was, this smooth-faced, shimmering immortal man bent and rattled and whining like a crone (327).

When *Interview with the Vampire* approaches its end, the reader has the impression that Lestat would not be able to survive the changes of the passing times, and a solitary existence. Rice's novel leaves the impression that Lestat becomes weak and without a trace of the characteristics that made him so appealing. Such predicaments could not be further from the truth. Lestat lives on to have his story told in the following volumes of *The Vampire's Chronicles* and the audience can learn the story from his own point of view, especially in the second novel entitled *The Vampire Lestat* (1985). Through the pages of the sequences of *Interview with the Vampire*, Lestat goes on to be the dazzling immortal that a captivated audience cannot help but love, and never ignore.

2.3 Story of a Lonely Guy

Louis is frequently described as Rice's "other vampire". Taking the role of the narrator of the novel, Louis decides to tell the events of his more than two hundred years of existence to a journalist—who is

referred simply as “the boy”—in a conversation that can be interpreted not only as an interview but also as a confession. The device of having the vampire providing the point of view of the story he inhabits is not a tradition that began with Rice, but such resource was definitely popularized by the author. *Interview with the Vampire* is therefore the product of the reports of this vampire whose life is full of torment, loneliness, doubts, and above all things guilt. Like *Dark Shadows*’ Barnabas Collins and *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer*’s Angel, Louis is the portrayal of the vampire who can be pitied in the midst of his eternal search for the meaning of life.

During the course of his human life, Louis inherits two indigo plantations in the state of Louisiana. Born in France, he spends almost the entirety of his life in American soil. A fortunate man, Louis de Pointe du Lac lives with his mother and siblings in one of the plantations, which he takes care of with the help of his African slaves. The most striking feature of Louis’s human life is his relationship with his younger brother Paul, whom he treasures and loves. Paul is a very religious man and spends his days among images of saints and prayers. He wishes to become a priest, an idea that Louis does not support.

The relationship between Louis and Paul reveals to the audience that which the vampire himself considers his egotistic nature. The reason why Louis does not agree with Paul’s decision is that he does not want to lose his brother to priesthood, and thus be deprived of his company. Their brotherhood is also affected when Paul declares that he is having visions of the Holy Virgin, asking him to sell all of the family’s property and go on a missionary work in France. A Catholic himself, Louis believes in God and the saints, but he cannot believe that

his brother is telling the truth. Moreover, he cannot believe that his brother could be a blessed, holy person with a sacred mission. In here lays a great paradox in Louis's life: the vampire never hesitates to believe in Lestat's wickedness, but cannot grasp his own brother's goodness. As Louis himself claims, "evil is always possible. And goodness is eternally difficult" (13). Such quotation reinforces Louis's Catholic education.

Paul eventually dies after an argument with Louis. The young man falls down the stairs of his Oratory and breaks his neck. The end of Paul's life marks the beginning of a transformation in Louis's lifestyle. Devastated by his brother's death, and also feeling an enormous amount of guilt, Louis starts drinking, gambling and looking for excuses to end his own life. Louis describes this period of his life to the journalist, which culminates in his meeting with Lestat:

I drank all the time and was at home as little as possible. I lived like a man who wanted to die but had no courage do it himself. I walked black streets and alley alone; I passed out in cabarets. I backed out of two duels more from apathy than cowardice and truly wished to be murdered. And then I was attacked. It might have been anyone—and my invitation was open to sailors, thieves, maniacs, anyone. But it was a vampire (11).

The vampire who found Louis is Lestat, who attacks Louis at his most vulnerable moment. As previously discussed, Lestat's motivation for turning Louis into a vampire is greed: he wants Louis's money. At any point of the narrative it is inferred that Lestat might have felt pity towards Louis's misery.

Interview with the Vampire presents a series of steps that Louis needs to follow in order to complete his crossing over.³ Afterwards, being drained almost to the point of death, Louis is instructed to kill a human, in this case an overseer of the Pointe du Lac plantation. The prospect of killing someone terrorizes Louis. He and Lestat had always had different perspectives towards death. As Louis narrates to the boy: “Lestat was laughing, telling me callously that I would feel so different once I was a vampire that I would laugh, too. He was wrong about that. I never laugh at death, no matter how often and regularly I am cause of it” (16). According to Lestat, the killing of the first victim would show Louis the nature of what he was about to become. After the killing of the overseer, Lestat feeds Louis with his own blood, and he is also told to eliminate all the human waste of his body—urine, feces, semen. At last, Louis drinks human blood completing his transformation into a night wanderer.

Through the character of Louis, Rice was able to demystify some of the vampire conventions that *Dracula* established. Christian artifacts like crucifixes and holy water cause no effect upon the Ricean vampires. Louis, who is an adept of the Christian faith during his human life, even expresses his appreciation for crucifixes at a certain point of the narrative. Also, garlic does not prevent a vampire attack. Louis and Lestat do not have the ability to turn into animals, or mist, neither can they control the weather. As Louis comments during his account, “that is, how would say today... bullshit?” (23). The vampire conventions that Rice’s vampires do embrace are the need to sleep in coffins (but not

³ Crossing over is the term used to designate the transformation of a human into a vampire (*The Everything Vampire Book* 77).

coffins full of earth or their native soil), the preference for wearing black garments, and their invariable pale skin with long canine teeth. At last, in *Interview with the Vampire*, the creatures can be killed through the methods of decapitation, stake, fire, and sunburn.

After Louis's transformation, he and Lestat share the Pointe du Lac property. The rest of Louis's mortal family is moved to an apartment in New Orleans. Louis hardly ever sees them, and in the rare occasions he does see his mother and sister, he always makes use of dark rooms and shadows to disguise his preternatural condition. Even though not horrific as Dracula, Louis cannot really pass for a human anymore. During the few moments in which the narrative changes to a third-person account⁴, Louis is described as

utterly white and smooth, as if he were sculpted from bleached bone, and his face was as seemingly inanimate as a statue, except for two brilliant green eyes that looked down at the boy intently like flames in a skull [...] [the boy] stared at the vampire's full black hair, the waves that were combed back over the tips of the ears, the curls that barely touched the edge of the white collar (4).

Like Lestat, Louis is portrayed as having more humanized features. Even though it is difficult for them to pass for ordinary men as it was mentioned above, Lestat and Louis do not possess a monstrous appearance like Dracula. The Ricean vampires resemble mortal men much more than Stoker's vampire, hence the use of the term "humanized vampire". His humanization would be a great advantage to

⁴ When Louis is not telling the reminiscences of his life to the journalist, the narration changes from past to present, and Louis is in a hotel room in California being interviewed. The third person point-of-view accounts for the interaction between the vampire and the journalist.

Louis should he choose to encircle and seduce his victims as his maker is used to doing.

The relationship between Louis and Lestat had never been anything other than antagonistic. Whereas Lestat chooses to embrace his new condition, Louis is tormented by the guilt of taking human lives in order to sustain his own existence. Such guilt leads Louis to feed on the blood of animals, a habit that he takes on but is not always successful, for human blood is truly his vital source. Another point of disagreement between the two vampires is that Louis not only hungers for blood, he also hungers for meaning. He wants to know what it means to be a vampire, what the purpose of what he considers to be a cursed existence is. It is with great contempt that he realizes that these issues do not matter to Lestat. Moreover, Lestat himself cannot provide the answers that Louis so desperately needs.

Another grave point of divergence between Louis and Lestat is Louis's inability to feel detachment. To Louis, all the transformations that came with his becoming a vampire like his enhanced senses of sight and smell, his superior strength and speed, not to mention his immortal condition, are faced more as curses than as blessings. Louis tries desperately to hold on to what humanity was left in him. In his trouble to feel detachment emerges Louis's central conflict: the balance between his vampiric and human sides. The desperate need to remain as human as possible is better expressed in Louis relationship with Babette.

Babette is one of the five Freniere sisters who live in a sugar plantation in the vicinities of Pointe du Lac. The Freniere brother was gone, and without a man ahead of business, the girls would soon lose their property. Louis has the habit of observing Babette and is fond of

the girl. He knows she is clever and that she could take care of the Freniere plantation if given the chance. In his eagerness to help Babette, Louis uses the resources of darkness and shadows to go to the girl, and advise her. Indeed, the Freniere plantation prospers under Babette's guidance. At first, Babette is thankful for the help of the mysterious man, but when Louis finally reveals himself, he is rejected, deemed a devilish creature. In this sense, the relationship between Louis and Babette may be compared to that of Lucy Westenra and her suitors, especially John Seward.

Babette's reaction to the truth hurts Louis and aggravates his doubts. The vampire shouts at the girl: "I don't know whether I come from the devil or not! I don't know what I am! [...] I am to live to the end of the world, and I do not even know what I am!" (70). Louis's despair to find answers about his existence eventually leads him to connive with Claudia and to leave for the Old World in pursuit of some answers. Louis and Claudia's relationship is nothing but ambiguous. They are sometimes understood as lovers, sometimes interpreted as father and daughter. Claudia is the one being Louis loves with all his heart and he would do anything to protect the little girl he once found crying over her mother's dead body.

Both Lestat and Louis played roles in Claudia's transformation into a vampire. It was Louis's who first found her and, giving in to his bloodlust, fed on the girl. It was Lestat who later gave Claudia his own blood, finishing the girl's crossing over. When Claudia was turned into a vampire, Lestat and Louis meddled with the greatest vampire taboo: giving a child, someone who would not be able to look out for themselves, the "immortal kiss" was considered irresponsible and

inappropriate. The nature of Claudia's relationship with Lestat and most of all with Louis is far too complex to be dealt with in the pages of this thesis which is committed to the analysis of the two main male vampires of Rice's novel. Therefore, I choose not to dwell in the dynamics of their relationships.

Nonetheless, I feel that Claudia is pivotal in Louis's decision to abandon Lestat and search for their origins. They both share the doubts about the beginning of their species and never believed that the three of them could be the only vampires in the world, despite the fact that this was what Lestat had told them. Thus, after attempting against Lestat's life, and thinking themselves to have been successful, they both ship to Eastern Europe in pursuit of their equals. In what Rice probably intended as homage to the greatest of all vampires, the first place Claudia and Louis went to was the Carpathian Mountains, which historically and literally delimited the beginning of Dracula's domains.

As in *Dracula*, the people from Eastern Europe believe in the existence of preternatural beings. "Because these simple country people [...] believed completely that the dead did walk and did drink the blood of the living. They knew our names: vampire, devil" (170), says Louis about them. In fact, in a small lodge, Louis and Claudia meet an Englishman, Morgan, in distress as the locals want to kill his wife, Emily. Emily had been attacked by a revenant⁵ in some monastery ruins nearby. When Louis examines the woman he sees the two small holes on her throat that unmistakably signalizes a vampire attack. Morgan's

⁵ Even though the term "vampire" and "revenant" are generally intertwined, Rice describes a revenant as a primitive vampire who is nothing more than a reanimated corpse without the ability to think.

rational mind cannot accept the supernatural explanations concerning his wife's conditions and refuses to have her staked and decapitated.

After tending to Emily and Morgan, Louis has the idea of going after the revenant in hopes he can have some of the answers he is looking for. His idea is useless, and he ends up killing the revenant. Louis, then, transforms himself in a sort of "vampire hunter", searching the Old World for someone or something who could explain to him the mysteries of his cursed existence. During their long journey, Louis and Claudia find only a handful of revenants. Louis goes on killing them, always presenting himself as a hunter for the local peasants. The situation changes only when Louis and Claudia arrive in Paris and they meet the creatures from the Théâtre des Vampires.

The Théâtre des Vampires is a theater company whose leader is Armand. Right from the beginning, Louis is mesmerized with the vampire and the chance to finally understand what they are. He soon starts asking questions, mainly about their nature. Afterwards, are vampires really the children of Satan, or can it be that they were created by God? This question is important to Louis because the vampire truly believes that, if he is a creature of the Devil, there will be no chance of salvation for him, therefore he is condemned to an eternal lifetime of guilt for the murders he commits, for Louis, due to his incapability of detachment, dies again and again, every time he brings death to someone. So, in many ways, his search for truth is the search for something that is as "beautiful and devastating" (31) as his killing.

Armand cannot give a conclusive answer to Louis's questions about their true nature. He does, however, think that someone who is capable of such compassion and attachment as Louis cannot be as "evil

as any other vampire who ever lived” (235) as he thinks himself to be. Armand, then, illuminates Louis with his concept of “gradations of good and evil”. The vampire explains to Louis that

you attribute great degrees and variations to goodness. There is the goodness of the child which is innocence, and then there is the goodness of the monk who has given up everything to others and lives a life of self-deprivation and service. The goodness of saints, the goodness of good housewives. Are all these the same? (235)

Louis can accept that but does not think the same principle might apply to evil as well. Louis believes that evil is “that dark, that empty, and without any consolation” (236) whereas, to Armand, it does not matter whether vampires are children of God, or the children of Satan; what matters is the power they have inside themselves. Such line of thinking leads Armand to describe himself as “evil with infinite gradations and without guilt” (285).

Armand’s concept of gradations of evil can arguably be used to understand Dracula, Lestat, and Louis as characters. Once more, MacAndrew’s concept of the Gothic villain allows for an understanding of Dracula to be a character as evil as it can be. In *Interview with the Vampire*, I feel inclined to understand Lestat as the dark force who opposes the light that emanates from the hero, Louis. Therefore, Lestat, if interpreted in terms of the gradations of evil, is understood by me as the second type of villain MacAndrew describes. As for Louis, his tormented self, the guilt, and loneliness he feels through his life make him alternate between villainy and heroism. Another possible understanding of Louis is his personification of a type of sympathetic hero. According to Jason Black in his article “What Makes a

Sympathetic Hero”, “to engender sympathy in your readers, your hero needs to display believable emotional responses to the difficult, terrifying problems you throw at him”. I consider Louis to be a character who moves readers with need for salvation in spite the danger he poses.

In one of the most striking moment of *Interview with the Vampire*, Louis’s torments and sense of loneliness lead him to walk into a church. His coming to such place was another effort to understand. “Why does He suffer me to live?” (147) asks Louis to the priest in confession. The priest does not believe he is talking to a vampire, and considers Louis’s behavior disrespectful. It is only when Louis shows the priest his preternatural abilities that the man believes the vampire is telling the truth. The priest, as Babette had done before, rejects Louis once he is confronted with the truth. The vampire narrates the powerful encounter: “His face infuriated me, his fear, his contempt, his rage. I saw in it all the hatred I’d seen in Babette, and he hissed at me, ‘Let me go, Devil!’ in sheer mortal panic” (147). Louis ends up killing the priest. The action that takes places in the church once again conveys Louis upbringing in a Christian faith and reveals that he, even though no longer a mortal, still hangs on to the notion that many people share that salvation lies in the hands of a superior power personified in the image of a God.

It is, however, only when he finds out that Claudia is dead, that Louis finally gives in to his killing instincts. The loss of his longtime companion enables the vampire to finally be free of any feeling of attachment. The recurring vampiric theme of revenge rises for Louis when he plots the murders of the vampires responsible for leaving Claudia to burn in the sun. He sets the theatre on fire, destroying it

completely, and kills as many vampires as he is able to. To Louis, those “are the only deaths [he has] caused in [his] long life which are both exquisite and good” (312). At the moment Louis avenges Claudia, readers believe that that is the time in which the vampire lets go of his humanity and celebrates killing as the ultimate experience Lestat had always thought it should be.

The loss of Claudia deeply affects Louis’s outlook on life. It is as if, without Claudia, life is not worth living anymore. After the fire, Louis and Armand leave Paris. They travel around the world, but Louis feels nothing. Armand believes that Louis could be his connection to the modern time. For vampires, adapting to the transformations of the world is pivotal if they truly want to be immortal. Armand explains to Louis that

for in becoming immortal they want all the forms of their life to be fixed as they are and incorruptible: carriages made in the same dependable fashion, clothing of the cut which suited their prime, men attired and speaking in the manner they have always understood and valued. When, in fact, all things change except the vampire himself; everything except the vampire is subject to constant corruption and distortion. Soon, with an inflexible mind, and often even the most flexible mind, this immortality becomes a penitential sentence in a madhouse of figures and forms that are hopelessly unintelligible and without value (283).

What Armand fails to realize is that Louis cannot be his link to modernity as Louis himself never feels like he truly belongs anywhere. From all the vampires I have come upon during the present research, Louis is the one creature that embodies the most the feeling of displacement that is commonly found and explored—in different

degrees—in all undeads. Louis never knows, never understands his place in the world. Such feeling is so intense and crucial to a comprehension of Louis as a character that in the end his displacement surpasses his need for answers. He reveals his realizations to Armand in that which is probably the most engaging passage of the narrative:

I wanted love and goodness in this which is living death, I said. It was impossible from the beginning, because you cannot have love and goodness when you do what you know to be evil, what you know to be wrong. You can only have the desperate confusion and longing and the chasing of a phantom goodness in its human form. I knew the real answer to my quest before I ever reached Paris. I knew it when I first took a human life to feed my craving. It was my death. And yet I would not accept it, could not accept it, because like all creatures I don't wish to die! And so I sought for other vampires, for God, for the devil, for a hundred things under a hundred names. And it was all the same, all evil. And all wrong. Because no one could in any guise convince me of what I myself knew to be true, that I was damned in my own mind and soul. And when I came to Paris I thought you were powerful and beautiful and without regret, and I wanted that desperately. But you were a destroyer just as I was a destroyer, more ruthless and cunning even than I. You showed me the only thing that I could really hope to become, what depth of evil, what degree of coldness I would have to attain to end my pain. And I accepted that. And so that passion, that love you saw in me, was extinguished. And you see now simply a mirror of yourself (336-337).

Without Claudia, Louis feels utterly and completely alone. In a way, the end of Claudia's story is the end of Louis's story as well. Louis de Pointe du Lac, the sympathetic hero Rice created, the vampire "whose evil was that [he] could not be evil" (261) earned his distinct

place in the hall of vampires who can be undoubtedly feared, but also generate empathy. The tormented, anguished vampire, struggling to balance evil and goodness inside himself while trying to find meaning in an ever changing world embodies some of the characteristics that would only be enhanced in the vampire novels for the present generation.

CHAPTER THREE

TWILIGHT AND THE VAMPIRE TEENAGE HERO

3.1. Teenage Dream

In 2005, American author Stephenie Meyer ventured in the world of literature publishing her first novel, the young adults' fiction *Twilight*. *Twilight* was the first volume of Meyer's vampire saga, which also accounted for the titles *New Moon* (2006), *Eclipse* (2007), and *Breaking Dawn* (2008). The saga became a worldwide phenomenon of bookselling, and it seemed that readers could not get enough of the puppy love between a mortal adolescent girl and the mysterious boy from her new school. Little did this girl, Bella, know that the boy she found so appealing was a vampire. In *Twilight*, Meyer explores a new approach to the vampire myth, creating a supernatural character that, in spite of the many years lived, still keeps the appearance of a seventeen-year-old boy. The teenage vampire who woos Bella and his devoted audience is Edward Cullen.

Edward Anthony Masen Cullen was born in Chicago in the beginning of the twentieth century. Edward's parents perish with the Spanish Influenza, and the boy gets sick as well. He is about to die when he is transformed by the vampire doctor Carlisle Cullen. The doctor is moved by Edward's mother's dying wish: she begs Carlisle to save his

son. Edward, then, becomes the first vampire Dr. Cullen transforms. In Meyer's vampire world, when a vampire bites a person, the creature releases venom that, if present in the bloodstream for too long, turns a person into a vampire as well. The process is described as a very painful one, and could last up to three days.

In spite of Edward's mother dying wish, Carlisle also admits to having turned the boy into a vampire moved by his loneliness and desire to have a family. The head of the Cullen clan, Carlisle is the respectful doctor of the small town of Forks, Washington, working at the local hospital. The son of a preacher, he lived in England in the seventeenth century. According to the doctor himself, people knew about the existence of supernatural beings such as werewolves and vampires. In fact, his father was committed to hunting these creatures, and Carlisle often went with him, being attacked and transformed by a creature much similar to the revenants Louis described in *Interview with the Vampire*. Deserted by his father, it took a very long time for Carlisle to come to terms with who he had become. When he found out that it was possible to live on the blood of animals, he committed to a strict diet, never giving in to his bloodlust. He then went to France where he studied to be a doctor, in an attempt to master his mental strength as well. In contrast with Stoker and Rice, Meyer creates in *Twilight* a group of vampires, captained by Carlisle, which attempts to interact with society in a more positive way.

When Carlisle transforms Edward, he teaches the fledgling that it is possible to live a type of life in which they do not have to be monsters. In the world of *Twilight*, because the Cullens are able to feed on animals and not attack humans, they are perceived in the eyes of the

narrator as “good vampires”. The vampires who choose to attack, feed on people and kill them are considered “the bad guys”. Carlisle unusual choice for a vampire diet culminates in the term “vegetarian vampire”. At a certain point, Edward describes the Cullens’ lifestyle as similar to that of a person who eats soy and tofu: “it doesn’t completely satiate the hunger—or rather thirst. But it keeps us strong enough to resist” (188).

The commitment to abstinence of human blood can account for an understanding of the *Twilight* vampires as endowed with free will. Clements argues that, in Meyer’s novel, the vampire’s free will, that is “the ability to do good—replaces the vampire’s evil nature from traditional vampire stories” (105). One might claim that the Ricean vampires, especially Louis, are endowed with free-will as well. In my research, I have not found the term “free-will” associated with any Ricean vampire. I state that, even if it might be the case—that free will is part of the world of the Ricean vampires, such characteristic is not as strong or as defining as it is in Meyer’s work. Eventually, Edward’s use of his free will in the name of his love for his family and for Bella plays a significant role in an understanding of his character as a hero. Thus, *Twilight* once more departs from a more traditional depiction of earlier vampire stories, in which the bloodsuckers are the evil, deceitful villains, as one notices in “The Vampyre”, *Carmilla*, and *Dracula*.

The vampires of *Twilight* are endowed with superhuman strength and speed, the only preternatural powers vampires possess in the story and that are basic characteristic of literary vampires. Edward, however, has an extra special ability: he is able to read minds. Such characteristic turns out be very useful for him when, ten years after being transformed, he rebelled against Carlisle’s vegetarianism. The boy

craved human blood, and decided to leave his maker behind. Talking about this period of his life, Edward confesses to the narrator:

Because I knew the thoughts of my prey, I could pass over the innocent and pursue only the evil. If I followed a murderer down a dark alley where he stalked a young girl—If I saved her, then surely I wasn't so terrible. [...] But as time went on, I began to see the monster in my eyes. I couldn't escape the debt of so much human life taken, no matter how justified (343).

Edward's perspective towards the drinking of human blood arguably reinforces the concept that the vampires who choose to live on preying mortals are considered monsters. In other words, they portrayed the villains in a clear contrast to the Cullens' virtuosity.

After a few years, Edward decides to recommit to Carlisle's philosophy, and the doctor goes on to add new members to his vampire family. In another display of virtuosity, he only chooses to turn those who are on the verge of dying, and would have no chance of survival except through the transformation. Thus, he turns Esme, whom he eventually marries, and the youngsters Emmet and Alice. Emmet, Alice, and Edward pose then as Carlisle's adoptive children. Later, Rosalie and Jasper would also join the Cullen clan. Using the last name Hale, they are said to be twin orphans who the Cullens rescued and adopted. Emmet and Rosalie are a couple, and so are Jasper and Alice. Edward is the only one who remains alone.

The Cullens have been living in Forks for two years when teenage Isabella (Bella) Swan arrives to live with her father. Bella is also the character to provide the point-of-view for *Twilight*, narrating the events of her life—that would forever be changed—in a first-person

account. The young narrator meets the Cullens during her first day at the new school, and she is instantly mesmerized by their appearance. In the school cafeteria, during the lunch break, Bella sees the family for the first time and describes her impressions:

They didn't look anything alike. Of three the boys, one was big—muscled like a serious weight lifter, with dark, curly hair. Another was taller, leaner, but still muscular, and honey blond. The last was lanky, less bulky, with untidy, bronze-colored hair. He was more boyish than the others, who looked like they could be in college, or even teachers here rather than students. And yet, they were all exactly alike. Everyone of them was chalky pale, the palest of all the students living in this sunless town. Paler than me, the albino. They all had very dark eyes, despite the range in hair tones. They also had dark shadows under those eyes—purplish, bruise-like shadows. As if they were all suffering from a sleepless night, or almost done recovering from a broken nose. Though their noses, all their features, were straight, perfect, angular. But all this is not why I couldn't look away. I stared because their faces, so different, so similar, were all devastatingly, inhumanly beautiful. They were faces you never expected to see except perhaps on the airbrushed pages of a fashion magazine. Or painted by an old master as the face of an angel (18).

From Bella's description of the Cullens' inhuman beauty, it is possible to infer that the vampires Meyer created depart completely from the horrific creature from vampire lore, and also from the physical portrayal of Dracula. In *Interview with the Vampire*, Lestat and Louis gained a more humanized personification, but Meyer definitely took the vampire physical appearance to a new level. Analyzing Edward, Clements states that:

He is more beautiful, more splendid, more glistening than any human being. Instead of vampirism being an irrevocable damnation, or even a disease or disability to be dealt with, as in Harris's books [*The Southern Vampire Mysteries* series] Meyer portrays the nature of the vampire as the ideal—as something higher than human, rather than lower (106).

In another contrast with the previous analyzed vampire characters, the appearance of the vampires in *Twilight* suffers slight modifications after the act of feeding. The shadows beneath their eyes become less noticeable, the skin less pale, and their eyes turn to a dark honey color. These changes, however, do not go unnoticed to Bella. Later, her perception of such changes would make the girl believe that the Cullens were possibly more than humans. As the narrator herself states: “well, they were *something*. [...] Edward Cullen was not...human. He was something more” (137-138). What the girl does not know was that this “more” meant a vampire.

The Cullens' choice to live on the blood of animals is a decision made so they can live in society. In this choice lies one of the novel's greatest paradoxes: apart from Carlisle, who works as a doctor, being therefore an asset to the community of Forks, the other Cullens pretty much keep to themselves. It is never clear how Esme spends her days. The teenage Cullens go to school but are never shown socializing with their peers. They are always together in their circle of five. Bella realizes this fact, but cannot understand such circumstance. In Bella's eyes, the Cullens are sort of superstars, but they do not seem to be accepted by anyone:

Now that I looked, it was obvious that they were all dressed exceptionally well; simply, but in

clothes that subtly hinted at designer origins. With their remarkable good looks, the style with which they carried themselves, they could have worn dishrags and pulled it off. It seemed excessive for them to have both looks and money. But as far as I could tell, life worked that way most of the time. It didn't look as if it bought them any acceptance here. No, I didn't fully believe that. The isolation must be their desire; I couldn't imagine any door that wouldn't be open by that degree of beauty (32).

Their isolation is only broken by the proximity between Bella and Edward. Still on the first day at school, Bella is assigned as Edward's Biology partner. Their first interaction does not go well. As Bella approaches her seat next to Edward's, the boy becomes oddly tense. Bella describes the scene:

Just as I passed, he suddenly went rigid in his seat. He stared at me again, meeting my eyes with the strangest expression on his face—it was hostile, furious [...] he never relaxed his stiff position on the edge of his chair, sitting as far from me as possible. I could see his hand on his left leg was clenched into a fist, tendons standing out under his pale skin. This, too, he never relaxed. He had the long sleeves of his white shirt pushed up to his elbows, and his forearm was surprisingly hard and muscular beneath his light skin. He wasn't nearly as slight as he'd looked next to his burly brother. [...] I peeked up at him one more time, and regretted it. He was glaring down at me again, his black eyes full of revulsion. As I flinched away from him, shrinking against my chair, the phrase *if looks could kill* suddenly ran through my mind (23-24).

Bella poses a great challenge to Edward. The reason he behaved the way he did was because he could sense the smell of her blood. It turns out that Bella's is more appealing to Edward than most human

blood is. Resisting the temptation of attacking her in the middle of the class demands a huge effort from the vampire, but the thought of putting his family in jeopardy allows him to resist. Bella is also intriguing to Edward in a different manner: she is the only human being whose mind he cannot read. *Twilight* presents then, a human who has power over the supernatural creature. In some ways, the mortal is even stronger than the vampire.

From that moment on, Edward is torn between the logic of his mind and the desire of his heart. His curiosity towards Bella makes him want to be close to the girl, but knowing he can fall into temptation and feed on her makes it necessary for him to step away. At this point of the narrative, supernatural Edward faces a typical human dilemma: the difficult choice between what is right and what is wanted. At first, Edward decides that he will not ignore Bella but will keep his distance, paying attention to the girl in case she needs help. He even tells Bella that it is not a good idea for her to be around him, that she shouldn't *want* to be around him, for he is dangerous. It seems a safe choice, one that the vampire is willing to commit to had fate not interfered.

During a particular snowy day at Forks, Bella finds herself involved in an accident. She is about to be crushed by a car, but Edward saves her. About the accident, Bella says:

I felt something solid and cold pinning me to the ground. I was lying on the pavement behind the tan car I'd parked next to. But I didn't have a chance to notice anything else, because the van was still coming. It had curled gratingly around the end of the truck and, still spinning and sliding, was about to collide with me again. A long oath made me aware that someone was with me, and the voice was impossible not to recognize. Two

long, white hands shot out protectively in front of me, and the van shuddered to a stop a foot from my face, the large hands fitting providentially into a deep dent in the side of the van's body. [...] When they'd lifted me away from the car, I had seen the deep dent in the tan car's bumper—a very distinct dent that fit the contours of Edward's shoulders...as if he had braced himself against the car with enough force to damage the metal frame...(56, 59).

Indeed, Edward puts himself between Bella and the car to prevent the girl from getting hurt. Edward hopes that, in the midst of the shock, Bella will not realize that he had done something humanly impossible. He is wrong. Bella knows Edward was nowhere around her at the moment of the accident. There can be no logical explanation for Edward being on her side at the moment of the impact and saving her. Yet an explanation she demands from the boy.

After the accident, Bella is portrayed as frequently asking Edward about what had happened in the school parking lot. Edward's version of the accident is always the same: he was close and pushed her so she would not be crushed. Bella knows that this is a lie. Edward's refusal to tell her the truth makes her think that the boy is no ordinary teenager. There is something different about him, and Bella is determined to find out. From superhero to alien theories, a lot different possibilities cross the girl's mind, and she confesses: "I was consumed by the mystery Edward presented. And more than a little obsessed by Edward himself" (67).

The first clues to Bella's discovery of Edward's true nature come from her childhood friend, Jacob Black. Jacob lives in the La Push Reservation together with his father and the other descendants of the

Quileutes, an Indian tribe. The Quileutes are believed to have come from a special race of men, who had the ability to turn themselves into wolves. Among the many Quileutes legends, there are the stories concerning the so called “cold ones”. The cold ones would be the vampires, the wolves’ direct enemies. Jacob describes the cold one as blood drinkers. In addition to the revelation, Jacob tells Bella that the elder Quileutes believe that the Cullens are the vampires who came into their lands almost a century before and who were, thus, not welcome in the Reservation. Jacob’s story is pivotal for Bella to think of a possible supernatural condition to explain Edward’s behavior.

After making further research at home, Bella comes to the conclusion that Edward’s being a vampire is not a complete impossibility. The descriptions of vampires she found on the Internet contain the same characteristics she perceives in Edward that puzzle her: the incredible strength and speed, the shift in color of the eyes, and the pale, cold skin. Conversely, Bella cannot believe that someone she deems so perfect, so beautiful could be the monster her research has pointed to. Looking further, the girl found an interesting definition of an Italian type of vampire, the *Stregoni benefici*, who are “said to be on the side of goodness and a mortal enemy of all evil vampires” (135).

The discovery of the possible existence of “good vampires” in opposition to the “evil vampires” brings relief to Bella. The girl feels that, if Edward is a good vampire—and she desperately wants to believe that—then, a romantic relationship between the two of them is possible. Bella is portrayed in such state of awe towards Edward that she is oblivious to the perils of being around a supernatural creature. In huge contrast with the humans from *Dracula* and *Interview with the Vampire*,

Bella embraces the otherness, the preternatural aspect of her beloved one. The slightest possibility of being with Edward makes her happy, and in Bella's own words, the choice of being with the vampire boy is "ridiculously easy to live with. Dangerously easy" (140).

In sight of Bella's insistence, and as the girl is so close to the truth, Edward finally gives in and admits to being a vampire. The scene, one of the most commented passages from the novel, takes place in a meadow, where Edward reveals his true nature by stepping into the sun. Speaking of the moment, Bella says:

Edward in the sunlight was shocking. I couldn't get used to it, though I'd be staring at him all afternoon. His skin, white despite the faint flush from yesterday's hunting trip, literally sparkled, like thousands of tiny diamonds were embedded in the surface. He lay perfectly still in the grass, his shirt open over his sculpted, incandescent chest, his scintillating arms bare. His glistening, pale lavender lids were shut, though of course he didn't sleep. A perfect statue, carved in some unknown stone, smooth like marble, glittering like crystal (260).

In *Interview with the Vampire*, Lestat and Louis are described as possessing skin that glowed, but nothing compared to Edward's sparkling skin. In another twist of the vampire myth, sunlight is not able to burn and consequently kill the vampire; the sun ultimately reveals what the vampire really is: a preternatural being. The revelation of Edward's luminous skin leads Bella and the readers to understand the Cullen's choice to live in Forks: the place is one of the most sunless towns of the planet, making it easier for them to mingle among humans.

The revelation of Edward's true self is not enough to keep Bella away. If nothing else, the girl is more in love with him than before.

Bella is never able to see past her idealized vision of the “absurdly handsome” boy, or the dangerous fact that Edward craves everything about her: her company, her love, but also her blood. Edward keeps revealing things about his vampire nature that would make most mortals at least suspicious. As a vampire, Edward does not need to sleep or breathe, for example. However, the boy cannot help feeling that at some point Bella will break down and run away. He confesses to the girl:

I know that at some point, something I tell you or something you see is going to be too much. And then you'll run away from me, screaming as you go'. He smiled half a smile, but his eyes were serious. 'I won't stop you. I want this to happen, because I want you to be safe. And yet, I want to be with you. The two desires are impossible to reconcile... (339).

In one of the most engaging passages of *Twilight*, Edward talks to Bella about his predatory nature. Much like Lestat, Edward acknowledges that a vampire is designed to seduce a victim, to encircle, to play around and eventually kill the prey, just like a cat—or a lion would do. The vampire even confesses that it is while hunting that he and his family let their inner instincts take control over them. The Cullens, as the other literary vampires, possess the urge to kill, but as they are moved by different motifs, they suppress such urge only letting go when it is safe for humans. About his predatory skills, Edward says:

'I'm the world's best predator, aren't I? Everything about me invites you in—my voice, my face, even my smell. As if I need any of that!' [...] 'As if you could outrun me', he laughed bitterly. He reached up with one hand and, with a deafening crack, effortlessly ripped a two-foot-thick branch from the trunk of the spruce. He balanced it in that hand for a moment, and then threw it with blinding speed, shattering it against

another huge tree, which shook and trembled at the blow. And he was in front of me again, standing two feet away, still as a stone. ‘As if you could fight me off’, he said gently. [...]He’d never been less human...or more beautiful. Face ashen, eyes wide, I sat like a bird locked in the eyes of a snake” (263-264).

In spite all the harm Edward can cause, nothing the boy says or does is enough to end Bella’s fascination with the vampire. The girl never falters. In fact, letting go of Edward constitutes an impossibility. Bella, the prey, the lamb succumbs to her predator, she falls for the lion.

After the revelation that Edward is a vampire, *Twilight* revolves around the theme of romantic love. Edward and Bella engage in a relationship, and both go through the experience of love for the first time. The discussion of first experiences arguably account for the immense popularity of the novel among the public *Twilight* is aimed at—young readers. It is important to notice that even though Edward is technically not a teenager anymore, he is portrayed as if he still is one, not showing signs of greater maturity or conscience as we see in Claudia, from *Interview with the Vampire*.

In the first installment of Meyer’s saga, however, the love the leading characters feel for each is somewhat platonic. Even though desire is present, their love cannot be consummated. In *Twilight*, the ultimate connection between the act of feeding, and the physical act of love is overlooked. Inasmuch as Edward is depicted as always struggling against his craving for his beloved’s blood, it seems easier for him to abstain from sex, even though the vampire has a very good reason for that, since sex between a vampire and a mortal could

culminate in the mortal's death. Edward is not willing to gamble on Bella's life.

The romantic love of the leading characters also poses the sole situation in which the vampire's free will is put to test. Edward *chooses* to feed on animals. He *chooses* not to be a monster. However, in spite of the danger he knows he offers to Bella, Edward is never really able to choose not to fall for the girl he desperately wants to kill. About the entanglement of love and free will in *Twilight*, Clements points out that "Edward tries to pull away from Bella more than once, but his love always draws him back—even though his free will tells him spending time with her is wrong" (122). In this sense, Edward may be understood as a vampire defined by the way he acts, and not for what he is.

Edward's ongoing battle between his need for Bella's blood and love continues through the following books of the saga. Throughout the novels, Edward maintains all the features that make him such an appealing character to his readership: the mysterious, handsome young vampire willing to fight against his nature to protect the girl he loves. *Twilight* turned out to be a phenomenon of popularity, selling more than a hundred million copies of the novel up to the end of 2010. The vampires Meyer created, and Edward in special, mark a turning point in the creature's portrayal, offering scholars and lovers of the vampire lore new possibilities for the understanding of the vampire character. *Twilight* flags a new chapter in the tradition of vampires. For the audience has also fallen for lions.

3.2. Zero to Hero

From *Dracula* to *Twilight*, the vampire character came a long way. If Dracula is the evil creature who poses a threat to humankind, the same cannot be said about the teenage vampire from Meyer's novel. Dracula is the evil force that needs to be exterminated so mankind can be safe. The vampire from Stoker's novel possesses no redeeming qualities and an understanding of Dracula as being something other than a villain is difficult. The Ricean vampires Lestat and Louis can be better understood in light of another Ricean vampire, Armand. The master of the Théâtre des Vampires, with his theory of "gradations of evil", provides great insight about both Lestat and Louis' personalities. Lestat, even if not in the same level of villainy as his predecessor, is a bad guy, even if he is a bad guy with the ability to do good. As for Louis, he embodies the villain/hero type: he is vicious, but also virtuous.

In *Twilight*, Edward and the rest of his clan are able to give in to their vice, but as they are endowed with free will, they choose to be virtuous. Speaking of the vampires that Meyer created, Clements notes that "her vampires are not monsters. They are closer to angels or superheroes than they are to demons. And while they thirst for human blood—the consistent characteristic that always defines vampire nature—they do not deal with the other vulnerabilities that have been traditionally associated with vampires" (108). In other words, Edward can be understood as a vampire whose features are less similar to villains and closer to those of heroes.

The literary hero descends in great part from the archetype of the mythological hero. In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell defines the hero from mythology as a

personage of exceptional gifts. Frequently he is honored by his society, frequently unrecognized or disdained. He and/or the world in which he finds himself suffers symbolic deficiency. [...] Whether the hero be ridiculous or sublime, Greek or barbarian, gentile or Jew, his journey varies little in essential plan (29-30).

In literary terms, Walter L. Reed in his work *Meditations on the Hero* points out that “the hero of a book no longer has to be heroic. He may be, indeed the very opposite. He owes his designation as hero solely to the fact that he is the book’s leading character” (8). In her article “What Makes a Heroic Figure in Literature?”, Lisa Jeffrey claims that the literary hero must face and overcome perils and/or obstacles before his journey comes to an end. In this sense, as the hero succeeds in his struggle, he stands out among the other characters. Using Reed and Jeffrey’s understanding of what constitutes a hero in literature, Edward has the potential to be credited as the novel’s hero.

The transformations of the vampire character from villain to hero can be defined as an ongoing process. It took place throughout the past century and reached its peak in the beginning of the last decade. The beginning of the changes in the depictions of vampires traces back to the first filmic adaptation of *Dracula*, in 1931. In the present research, I analyzed how the character created by Bram Stoker in 1897 was conceived as a horrific creature, whose thirst not only for blood, but also for revenge posed a threat to the humans he wished to vanquish. In the purest sense of the word, Dracula is the villain of the universe he

inhabits. However, when Tod Browning brought the vampire to the cinema, the casting of Hungarian actor Bela Lugosi as the leading man endowed Dracula with great sex appeal. About the first filmic adaptation and Lugosi's role, von Riedemann observes that

By the early 1930, audiences were tired of gruesome creatures and wanted their villains to be well-dressed. [...] Hungarian born Bela Lugosi, who had played Dracula in John L. Balderston's Broadway show for 2 years, fit the bill perfectly. Intense, charismatic, and good-looking, Lugosi was the polished villain, his thick Hungarian accent (he learned his line phonetically) adding exotic menace. If there is one performance that illustrates the vampire's deadly allure, it would be Lugosi's.

Lugosi's portrayal of Dracula had a major influence in the way vampires were portrayed from that moment on. When Christopher Lee was cast as Dracula in Terrence Fisher's *Horror of Dracula*, in 1958, the English actor continued to make the bloodsucker a "mesmerizing presence with his 6'5" height and basso voice". Dracula could be a devilish being, but a very sexy one. In the most recent adaptation of Stoker's classical novel, another English actor, Gary Oldman, played the vampire with generous amounts of charm while he tried to find his long lost love, his fiancée Elisabetha. The relationship between the vampire and his beloved is not present in the novel. Its addition to the cinematic plot contributed to the image of the vampire that would be consolidated in the years ahead: the monster that is able to feel.

The cinematic renditions of *Dracula* influenced the way the night wanderers were approached in television. Barnabas Collins, from the 1975 ABC show *Dark Shadows* was a hundred-and-seventy-five-year-old vampire who relished in human blood but, like Oldman's

Dracula, he was tormented by the loss of the woman he loved. The tormented vampire soon became the most appealing character of *Dark Shadows*, captivating the audience with the mix of dread and sympathy the vampire evoked. Many vampire scholars understand Barnabas Collins as the character who made vampires begin to be seen less as a villain and more as a sympathetic character.

Anne Rice explored the figure of the sympathetic vampire in her *Vampire Chronicles*. As we have seen, her two most famous creatures, the vampires Lestat and Louis, are in the center of the story of the first volume of her *Chronicles*, the best selling *Interview with the Vampire*. Lestat, probably the best known vampire after Dracula, is portrayed in this first installment as a real bloodsucker: he kills indiscriminately, devoid of pity or remorse. Extremely charming, Lestat enjoys seducing his victims before killing them. Although Lestat displays many characteristics that deem him a hateful villain, his charms and easy going manner of facing his preternatural condition make him a very popular character among the fans of Rice's novel.

Louis, the vampire who narrates his life both as a human and as an immortal to a journalist, is portrayed in contrast to Lestat. He never really accepted his fate, and having to do what his new nature asked of him—the killing of humans and the consumption of their blood in order to survive—makes him suffer. He feels attached to people, in spite of their rejection and repulsion. Louis spends his centuries brooding about the matters of life and death, salvation and damnation, looking for answers that could bring him comfort. The eternal search for meaning makes Louis, as *Dark Shadows*' Barnabas Collins before him, the sympathetic vampire-hero in the eyes of his audience.

In 1997, another television show took the sympathetic aspect of the vampire to a new level. Joss Whedon's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* portrayed vampires that were evil creatures, and must be destroyed. However, the show highlighted the romantic relationship between the slayer from the series' title and Angel, the vampire with a conscience. Like Rice's Louis, Angel is tormented by his condition, and, due to a curse that was imposed on him, he had his soul restored, which caused the vampire to eternally suffer and feel guilty about his wrongs from the past. His soul also enables him to fall in love with the woman whose job is to exterminate his kind. In her article "How the Literary Vampire Became a Sympathetic, Romance Icon", Linda Seddon observes that

Angel was a perfect example of the emerging romantic vampire. A brooding, mysterious figure reminiscent of bad boy James Dean, Angel was dangerously sexy. At the same time, he possessed a heart of gold. He fought on the side of good in a constant attempt to make up for his past misdeeds. He was self-sacrificing, willing to risk eternal torture for his beloved Buffy.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer's target audience was teenagers and they are the public that vampire fiction, in its various forms, concentrates on in the new century.

Analyzing the previous depictions of vampires before *Twilight*, one can observe that the way vampires are portrayed has been progressively changing. Vampires have been distancing themselves from evil, devilish renditions to be explored as sympathetic, romantic figures. It seems, though, that the association of vampires with qualities like beauty, goodness, virtuosity, as well as feelings like love and sympathy has been enhanced with the publishing of *Twilight* and other

contemporary vampire fictions such as the television shows *The Vampire Diaries* and *True Blood*, and also other young adults' novels like *Vampire Academy* and *House of Night*. In recent portrayals, the vampire character can therefore be deemed a hero. Nonetheless, are all the changes enough to characterize the contemporary vampire as a Romantic hero?

In his work *The Roots of Romanticism*, Isaiah Berlin acknowledges the Romantic Movement as “the largest recent movement to transform the lives and the thought of the Western world” (1). Berlin went about the works of prominent authors of universal literature to reach a definition for the term Romanticism. However, a single definition for the movement that had its beginning in Germany but became more popular in France in the eighteenth century could not be achieved. Nietzsche, Goethe, and many others had their own particular view on the movement. I would like to rely on a definition that I believe is suitable to explain the vampire Edward and his shift from villain to hero. Such definition came from Swiss critic Jean Charles de Sismondi, who understands Romanticism as “a union of love, religion, and chivalry” (15).

Love is the ultimate theme of *Twilight*. The romantic love the vampire and the mortal girl feel for each other permeates Meyer's novel. In Clements' analysis of the work, the scholar observes that “Edward and Bella's relationship fits the pattern of traditional romantic fiction” (113). First, Edward is portrayed with such a superior attractiveness that it overwhelmed Bella. Edward, in turn, feels drawn to Bella, moved by his bloodlust and the mystery of not being able to read her mind. Second, the couple faces the conflict that constituted an impasse for

their love: Edward is a vampire and, as such, he thirsts for her blood. At last, Edward is portrayed as a sort of savior, always keeping Bella safe from harm. Still according to Clements, *Twilight* fulfills—to a certain extent—the female romantic fantasy. In the end, love is the sole force that stands in the way of moral: because of love, Bella wants to become a vampire; because of love, Edward questions his ethics and engages in a romantic relationship with a mortal.

The religious theme, even if downplayed in *Twilight*, is still present. Edward, unlike Louis, has no doubts about what will happen to him once he meets his true death. He has his damnation as an unshakable truth. He lost his soul the minute he was turned into a vampire, and therefore, he does not stand a chance for Christian salvation. Edward's strong beliefs concerning the loss of his soul and the impossibility of salvation are the ultimate arguments the vampire uses to prevent Bella from turning into a vampire as well. The teenage girl, in her idealized vision of the vampire world, wants to be like her beloved so no obstacle can come between them and their love. Edward, in turn, hesitates to turn the girl as he does not want her to lose her soul.

From the moment Edward falls in love with Bella, his behavior towards the girl is nothing but chivalrous. In many ways, Edward's attitudes resembled the attitudes of the knights of medieval times. The vampire is always ready to protect and defend his family as well as Bella. In *Twilight*, the first stages of the teenagers' relationship much resemble the codes of courtly love, in which the knight does not seek sexual pleasure, but the admiration and endearment of his dame. Also, in his abstinence from human blood in order to do good, Edward is portrayed as a noble, virtuous character. Such characteristics, as

mentioned in the previous chapter, contrast him with the so called “bad vampires” of the novel. They also reinforce the fact that Edward was brought up in a different time, reinforcing its values and beliefs.

Together with other contemporary vampire characters, Edward possesses many of the characteristics of a hero. They are the leading characters of their stories and they must face struggles in order to achieve success in its various forms: salvation, redemption, love. Thus, in many ways, the vampires of today can be identified with the Romantic hero as defined above. However, more important than this is the fact that they embody fears and hopes their readers can relate to, and thus make the vampire character extremely more popular and adored by a readership that is also facing coming of age experiences.

Authors like Anne Rice and Chelsea Quinn Yarbro had already signaled, in their vampire depictions in the seventies, a type of vampire character that can be understood as possessing qualities that place them on the side of good. Therefore, the two authors’ creations are more inclined to virtue than to sin. However, this new approach to vampires is definitely popularized by Stephenie Meyer in *Twilight*. The teenager vampire hero she created found his counterparts in other contemporary vampire fictions, such as the creatures from L.J. Smith’s *The Vampire Diaries*, and Charlaine Harris’s *The Southern Vampire Mysteries*, but Edward reached his place as the vampire who would forever represent the turning point in the vampire tradition.

– CONCLUSION: What Is This I Find?

The beginning of the twenty-first century meant a new beginning for vampires in literature. In terms of literature in the English language, the traditional aristocratic portrayal of the vampire character, which began with Polidori's Lord Ruthven, has lost its reign to a new depiction. The vampires of today go out in broad daylight, drink synthetic blood or feed on the blood of animals, and are able to feel and experience things like humans. The contemporary vampires also have very little physical resemblance to the vampires of the past. From gruesome creatures, they became handsome, attractive beings that make the audience swoon, and boost an ever growing popularization and selling of vampire fiction.

In an essay entitled "Ethical Vampires", author Emily Wilkinson observes that "vampires figure the anxieties of their cultural moment". According to Wilkinson, *Dracula*, for example, explores the English fear of foreign invasions, and the perils of indulging in amoral sexual activities. Anne Rice's vampires, depicting the relationship of two adult men raising a child together is a metaphor for the rising of homosexual families and the awareness of sexual transmitted diseases, like AIDS. Wilkinson understands Edward and the rest of the Cullens as "enlightened beings". By restraining themselves to the consumption of animal blood, the so called vampire "vegetarianism", they mirror the

present discussions concerning the necessity of sustainable development.

Wilkinson also states that the contemporary vampire is a reflex of the values and beliefs of our society. The vampires of today do not hesitate to spend the money they accumulated throughout their immortal existence with luxuries. Meyer's vampires, for example go shopping for fashionable clothes, buy expensive cars, and own private islands in exotic places. The vampire has too much and wants too much. Wilkinson observes that the vampire's behavior is in accordance with the principles of the capitalist regime that governs our society. According to the author

The vampire's insatiable hunger for blood mirrors our insatiable hungers for food, wealth, property, and possessions. Contemporary vampire fiction mirrors our collective anxiety about our need for self-discipline and a return to a more humane approach to our fellow beings: Now, the vampire, the most appetitive and unrepentantly murderous of our culture's mythic archetypes, restrains himself in our popular fiction.

In analyzing the relationship between the contemporary vampire and our cultural moment, Wilkinson has come to valid, interesting conclusions, but they are hardly enough to reach the core of the subject: why is the vampire so popular among the young generation?

The success of *Twilight* and its teenage vampire character has experienced boosts the interest for vampire fiction. *Dracula* and *Interview with the Vampire* are highly acclaimed works, both in terms of novels and their filmic adaptations. However, the vampires that preceded Edward were praised in a different way. Meyer's creation seems surrounded by an atmosphere of fan commotion and obsession

that previous vampires haven't known. In an interview for *USA Weekend*, British actor Robert Pattinson, who plays Edward in the filmic adaptation of the novel, acknowledges that "there's something about that character that, for some reason, has sparked an interest in massive degrees in so many different people". The film, as the novel, has also been successful in the box offices. Differently from the many adaptations of *Dracula*, or even the 1994 film *Interview with the Vampire*, movie goers did not pay to see the story, or famous actors playing vampires. They went to see *the* vampire. They wanted to see Edward.

The young public fascination with Edward can be understood insofar as the contemporary vampire portrays many of the anxieties and doubts that many adolescents feel and experience at this time of their lives. As any ordinary teenager, Edward attends school, a place where he is clearly an outsider. The feeling of displacement Edward depicts mirrors the same anguishes and vulnerabilities human adolescents can feel at this age. Also, as typical young boy, Edward is going through coming of age experiences, blossoming to love and sexuality. Such experiences, that can be exciting and terrifying at the same time, are expressed in Bella and Edward's romantic relationship. The identification that adolescents find in Meyer's characters, more than matters of sustainability or capitalism, is what truly makes *Twilight* and the contemporary vampire so popular. In an article entitled "Love and Pain and the Teenage Vampire Thing", Terrence Rafferty claims that

[Meyer's] on to something there: the extreme life-and-deathness of the adolescent notion of romance. But the vein that Ms. Meyer's story taps most obviously is simple, basic fear of sex. Bella

is, recognizably, every teenager who is terrified of going all the way, and Edward, less grounded in reality, is a fantasy incarnation of that scared girl's ideal boyfriend, infinitely — you might say eternally — patient with her trepidation. (And have I mentioned that he's extremely good-looking?)

Edward surely goes a long way to distance himself from the traditional vampire character. As it was previously seen, vampires were monstrous creatures that need blood to survive. They make use of their preternatural abilities to prey and feed on humans using their fangs. They sleep during sunlight hours, usually in coffins or someplace underground and only come out at night. Vampires frequently have the ability to transform themselves into animals or control the weather. Conversely, Edward tries hard to suppress his killing instincts and his thirst for human blood. He tries to be and do good. He also lives with a family of vampires that is committed to the same values and has a routine very similar to that of an average human.

If the traditional vampire character is invariably a villain, the contemporary vampire—and specially Edward—is more of a hero. In his constant attempt to redeem himself from the fact that he is a vampire and from his misdeeds of the past, Edward embodies some of the main characteristics of a fictional hero: he is the protagonist of the novel, he is appealing and mysterious. In his love for a mortal girl, he is faced with what seems an impossible situation, a great obstacle he must overcome. In addition, differently from other vampires, Edward's physical beauty is idealized. The vampire awakens the sympathy of his readers, who hope he will eventually succeed.

Clements juxtaposed the terms hero and alpha hero to describe Edward. She feels inclined to consider the vampire a hero as he is “set up predictably as stronger and more mysterious and thus more desirable than other men” (114). Edward is also “unknowable, with depths that both draw and scare Bella” (114). Speaking of the Romantic hero, Reed defines it as

Not a simple being, but one involved in a set of relationships both dialectical and dynamic. The hero is a figure related to a ground. He is not himself divine or immortal but, like Achilles, or Odysseus, he has a privileged relation to the supernatural of the gods or, as is more usual in Romanticism, the natural supernaturalism of the created world. [...] The hero is secondly related as an actor is to an audience, as an extraordinary person is to the ordinary member of his society (10).

Edward can be related to Reed’s definition of the Romantic hero. At first, the vampire is not immortal, as he can die if torn to shreds and burned. Next, he does not have a special relation to the supernatural; he *is* the supernatural. Finally, in Bella’s eyes, and arguably, in the reader’s as well, Edward is ultimately an extraordinary person, above good and evil.

In Berlin’s words, the Romantic hero is also “the rebel, l’homme fatal, the damned soul” (18). Edward may be considered a rebel insofar as he chooses to feed on animals; he chooses to live a kind of life that is different from that of the vast majority of his kind. So, in a way, Edward rebels against his nature. The vampire is an “homme fatal” in both senses of the term: Edward is depicted as possessing devastating good looks, and as a predator that can easily kill as he pleases. In spite of the fact that the vampire chooses not to live up to the second part of

the definition, he still is endowed with the ability to act like an “homme fatal”. The issue of the damned soul may be controversial. Undoubtedly the vampire considers himself to be damned for being what he is, no matter how good he tries to be and act. However, Edward believes he no longer possesses a soul, that it was lost at the moment of his damnation.

In making it possible to be romantically involved with a human, the contemporary vampire is opening new possibilities for the exploration of love and romanticism in fiction. In an attempt to find an answer to the current fascination with vampires—and Edward in particular—critic Mary Rayme quotes from an interview she conducted:

In 2009, Romeo and Juliet would have no problem getting married in Vegas by an Elvis impersonator. Love has no foil anymore (race, gender, religion, family feuds), therefore the only compelling modern day romance plot is if your intended is a monster literally (“Why Are Vampires So Popular?”).

The incredible acceptance of *Twilight* and its vampire allowed the proliferation of the publishing of a series of vampires stories specifically aimed at the young adults’ audience. In all of the novels, the vampires follow the same pattern of construction that Edward presents: they are young and good-looking; they are falling in love for the first time. But most of all they are trying to find their place in the world and figure out what they are supposed to do.

At last, it is not wrong to state that the contemporary vampire is a Romantic hero, but this is not the most important fact about it. What is most striking about the transformations vampires have been through is their acquired romanticized nature that evokes the empathy—and love—of its audience. At a certain point of the narrative of *Twilight*, Bella

confides to her readers: “About three things I was absolutely positive. First, Edward was a vampire. Second, there was a part of him—and I didn’t know how potent that part might be—that thirsted for my blood. And third, I was unconditionally and irrevocably in love with him” (*Twilight* 195). The transformations of the vampire character Edward embodies makes him a much beloved character. He is the vampire that refuses to be a villain; he is the vampire that became a hero. More than any fictional changes, Edward is the vampire who captured the heart and minds of a generation of new readers, who, like Bella Swan, seem to be “unconditionally and irrevocably in love” with vampires.

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